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THE GENTLEWOMAN'S BOOK OF ART NEEDLEWORK

EDITED BY W. H. DAVENPORT ADAMS

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PORTRAIT OF AN ITALIAN BEAUTY, FROM THE NATIONAL GALLERY.

(*See page* 119.)

THE

GENTLEWOMAN'S BOOK

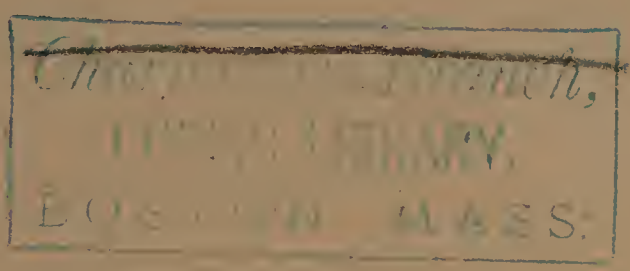
OF

ART NEEDLEWORK

BY

ELLEN T. MASTERS

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS



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PREFACE.

THE widespread interest taken nowadays in artistic embroidery is sufficient excuse for dealing with the subject in this Series. The fear lest the ancient art should fall once more into decadence, as women turn their attention more and more to masculine pursuits, need not be seriously entertained, so long as our workers maintain their present high and ever-improving standard, and are encouraged in their endeavours by the most exalted in the land.

My information on the subject, and my illustrations, have been culled from many sources, and I take this opportunity of expressing my appreciation of the kindness of Her Majesty the Queen, who has added so greatly to the value of the volume by the loan of photographs of historical and beautiful lace.

My best thanks are also due to Miss May Morris, Mrs. Wardle, and many others who have lent embroideries. All will find due acknowledgment in the text, though space prevents me from mentioning them individually here.

E. T. M.

CONTENTS.

THE GENTLEWOMAN'S BOOK OF ART NEEDLEWORK.

CHAPTER I.

THE TOOLS AND MATERIALS.

"Lawn as white as driven snow;
Cyprus black as e'er was crow;
* * * * *
"Pins and poking-sticks of steel,
What maids lack from head to heel:
* * * * *
"Will you buy any tape,
Or lace for your cape?
Any silk, any thread,
Any toys for your head,
Of the new'st, and fin'st, fin'st wear-a?"

Winter's Tale, Act IV., Sc. ii.

THE writing of a complete history of needlework would be a mighty task indeed, and by no means an easy one, even with our present knowledge of the domestic lives of nations who have

disappeared from the world for centuries. Such a volume, moreover, would probably be of value merely as a book of reference ; but a slight sketch of the evolution of embroidery ought to be of interest to every woman whose prerogative it is to produce upon her canvas artistic forms clothed in the richest colours, wielding for the purpose, not a paint-brush, but the homely "threaded steel." Before proceeding to a sketch of the embroideries themselves, it will perhaps be interesting to see how far the history of the various materials used may be followed in the necessarily limited space afforded by a chapter.

The earliest needlework probably consisted in sewing together the skins of animals captured in the chase, to form either bodily covering or rough tents to serve as a shelter from the weather. It is supposed that the first needles were afforded by the spines or thorns of plants. The thread was most likely supplied by the fibre of certain stems, and, when anything coarser was needed, by thin strips of the leather itself. The thorns, being easily blunted, and liable to bend or break, were soon supplanted by fish-bones, and later on by needles made of animals' bones, which, without much difficulty, could be cut into somewhat of a pointed form

and pierced at one end. Several of these bone needles have been discovered, and in shape and size are not unlike our ordinary bodkins. When once the art of working metals developed, needles soon improved, and many that are made of bronze are, though somewhat longer, blunter, and less highly polished, very similar to those now employed. What we know as "straw" needles are almost exactly the same as to size and general make. Bronze needles were in use among the Egyptians, and have not unfrequently been found in tombs, also at Pompeii and Herculaneum.

The ancient Greeks were justly famed for the beauty of their embroideries, legend relating that they were taught by Minerva herself; and even the people of England had obtained their reputation for stitchery long before the existence of a steel needle. When admiring the exquisite but later workmanship of the famous Syon cope, it is indeed hard to believe that the needles with which it was worked were in any way less perfect than those we at present esteem so highly. It would be a curious experiment to set a nineteenth-century embroideress down to a frame, and to give her a certain task to perform with one of these old-world tools; and the fact that so small a proportion of modern amateur

work compares favourably with that of our ancestresses is little to the credit of the embroideresses of to-day.

That needles were in use many centuries before Christ is proved by the statement in the "Rig Veda" that "clothes and the like wrought with a needle last a long time." An allusion to a "silver" needle is made in the "Roman de la Rose"; but steel needles were not made at all in England till 1545, and until that time they came from abroad, many, indeed, from far-off India. The comedy of *Gammer Gurton's Needle* simply amuses us now; but the loss of the

> "Lytle thing with a hole in the ende, as bright as any syller,
> Small, long, sharp at the point, and straight as any piller,"

which was the only needle existing in a country place, would have been no laughing matter had it really occurred.

After the death of the original manufacturer of steel needles in this country the art was lost, and it was not till about a hundred years later that it was revived. A German takes the credit of the revival of the trade; and since then we have had no cause to deplore the decadence of the manufacture, as English needles are famous all the world over.

Pins, almost as useful as needles, have followed much the same stages of development; but as they require less perfect shaping than needles, it is not surprising to find brass pins of a very tolerable shape amongst ancient Roman remains. Many other antique pins have been found, made of bronze, wood, bone, or ivory.

There is no record of the first manufactory of pins in England; but it has been ascertained that they were made here as early as the beginning of the fifteenth century. From this time downwards, many records are left of the statutes and regulations regarding the making of pins, which were then generally shaped out of bone, silver, or wood. Some of these statutes are of a very protectionary nature, and forbid the import of any foreign-made goods: this was in answer to the appeals of the home-workers, who, even in those days, were suffering from foreign competition. In the reign of Henry VIII. a law was passed to regulate the manufacture of pins, and to ensure their being free from flaws. "No person," it enacted, "shall put to sale any pins but only such as shall be double-headed, and have the head soldered fast to the shank, the pins well smoothed, and the shank well sharpened." When we read

that pins were as dear as ten shillings a hundred, according to our present value of money, we feel that people were indeed entitled to a thoroughly good article at the price. It is not surprising, either, that the gentlewomen of the sixteenth century found a present of pins, or their equivalent in money, acceptable; hence the term "pin-money," to denote an allowance made by husband to wife for private expenses. Catherine Howard was the first to introduce into England the knowledge of pins more like those of our own times than any that had been seen here before; and shortly after her day a manufactory for wire pins was started, since when pins, like needles, have been gradually improving, till they have attained their present state of perfection. For pillow lace-making fish-bones took the place afterwards filled by metal pins; and it was not till these were largely manufactured in England that the art became at all thriving.

Thimbles, as we know them, are of comparatively modern invention compared with needlework itself, their manufacture not being known in this country before the fifteenth century. The invention, it is said, was introduced from Holland. Before that time thimbles were, not unnaturally perhaps, made of leather, and in that form were probably of as

ancient a date as the bone needles themselves. The derivation of our word points to the use of the thimble on the thumb, where it is still worn by sailors and some other masculine workers. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries thimbles were often of gold or silver, richly ornamented with precious stones, but must have been intended more for show than for use.

The following pretty legend, taken from "The Compleat Florist," published in 1706, tends to show that thimbles, in some form or other, were supposed, from very early days, to be in use amongst the heavenly embroideresses; but we are not enlightened as to the material of which they were made!

"*Juno* was one day so idle," it is said, "she did not know how to spend her time; so she took a fancy of working upon Tapestry, and, according to the custom of that sort of Work-folks, clap'd a Thimble on her Finger, to prevent her being hurt by the Needle.

"We do not know how it came about, but so it was, that the Goddess, having a mind to be Frolicksom, drop'd her Thimble upon the Earth. Some say Jupiter, playing the Rogue with her, took her Thimble and threw it away; others say, 'twas the God *Momus* that told such comical Stories as put

the Goddess into a shaking fit of Laughter, in which she toss'd her Arms about till her Thimble fell off. But let the occasion be what it will, down it drop'd. The fall of the Thimble put *Juno* out of humour; she did not know who to blame for it; only she mutter'd within herself, and grew so troublesom, that not one of the Deaties could be easy about her. *Jupiter*, seeing this, told her, to comfort her, *That he would turn her Thimble into a Flower*; which accordingly he did, ordering the *Flower*, when Blown, to represent a sort of Thimble, which, being worn upon the finger, occasion'd the *Flowers* bearing the name of *Digitalis*.

"*The Moral.—This fable shews, that as a small matter puts a Woman at her Wits' end, so a trifle will recover her; so much is that Sex subject to Inconstancy.*"

In spite of so ungallant a moral, we are by no means convinced that the goddess would find a foxglove flower at all a convenient substitute for her lost thimble.

The use of scissors has been traced back to several centuries before Christ, for they are mentioned in the "Rig Veda." It is, however, supposed that scissors as we know them were not in use before the twelfth century, the early kind being of

the nature of shears, and made with the two blades in one piece, forming a circle at the end just like our sheep-shearing scissors. Later on, it was customary for every lady to have near at hand a pair of scissors ; for they were needed as much for opening letters, which were bound round with silken threads, as for embroidery ; and many of the sixteenth-century scissors still left to us, however indifferent the quality of the steel, are richly inlaid and ornamented with various other metals.

Among the materials used in embroidery, silk claims the foremost place, as much from the frequency with which it is used as from its antiquity, which is by no means so great in Europe as is that of either wool or linen. As the Chinese nation introduced a skein of silk among their earliest hieroglyphics, such as date from three thousand years before Christ, it is strange that the oldest Egyptians were unacquainted with silk. This was even the case in Biblical times, as authorities have decided that the mention of the material in the Old Testament is a mistranslation.

When once the use of silk became known in Egypt, the woven material soon spread to Asia Minor, and was introduced into the South of Europe through the conquests of Alexander the

Great in India. The use of silken fabrics among the Romans involved much expense, the raw material being brought from abroad; hence it followed that its use was limited to the emperor, and the weaving of the precious thread was restricted to the court and its precincts. Certain of the emperors set themselves against the extravagant expenditure thus entailed; but in most cases the love of display gained the victory, and the much-prized fabrics were sold weight for weight for gold.

We are all familiar with the oft-told tale of the two Greek monks who, by importing silkworms' eggs from China in their bamboo staves, revealed the secret of the culture of the fibre to the dwellers in Greece. From Greece the industry spread to Sicily, and there, as early as the sixth century, the weaving of silk received great encouragement from the Norman conquerors of the island. They did their best to introduce supplies of silkworms' eggs, and with them Greek weavers, to instruct the natives in the culture of the silk and the methods of weaving it. Thus the art became firmly established in Sicily, and Sicilian velvets, brocades, silks, satins, and damasks continued to hold their own until the sixteenth century. By that time the art had spread over the whole of the South of Europe; and Italy

and France took their share of the high esteem in which such fabrics were held,—Florence, Venice, and Lyons becoming specially famous.

It is not known at what period the silken strands were first used for embroidery, but their employment was probably contemporaneous with that of the woven silk fabrics themselves. Silk-weaving in England is supposed to have been carried on in the religious houses as early as the eighth century; but though it lingered here for many hundreds of years, it was not until the arrival of the Huguenot refugees that the manufacture became one of the staple trades of the country.

Some of the ancient silken fabrics were extremely splendid, and remarkable as much for their lightness in weight as for their strength and colouring. The "samit" or "samite" we so often read of in poetry, old and new, was one of these materials, its name implying that each thread was sixfold, and it was therefore strong, as well as beautiful, in texture. It was often enriched by an admixture of gold and silver threads. "Ciclatoun" and "sandal" were others of these old-world fabrics; the former being often woven half of silk, half of gold, so that as the wearer moved a "shot" effect was given to the material. Satin, such as we now use, was not made

in England until the fourteenth century, when it at once became popular as a foundation for rich embroideries of all kinds. The characteristic colour of the first satin was a rich, fiery red, obtained, it is imagined, from cochineal, an allusion to which is found in "blattin," the old name for the material.

According to Dr. Rock, the history of velvet has yet to be written. There can be no doubt of its Oriental origin, and it was probably introduced into Europe by the Crusaders. It was used almost exclusively for the state robes of monarchs and for ecclesiastical purposes. Florence and Venice were both famous for their velvets, that of the former city being often distinguished by the use of tiny loops of gold thread amongst those forming the silky pile of the fabric. Owing to the thickness of the pile of this material, it was rarely adorned with any embroidery that needed working directly upon it. Either a design was worked over with gold upon linen, and then cut out and applied to the velvet; or silk, satin or velvet of another colour took the place of the embroidery, was *appliqué* to the foundation, and edged with fine silk and tinsel cord. Many pieces of work in this style that were used for pilaster hangings are to be studied in the South Kensington Museum.

Woollen and linen fabrics date from pre-historic times, and it is very doubtful which can claim seniority. That all the ancient pastoral nations must have bred sheep for the sake of wool as well as for food is certain ; but many authorities believe that rough fabrics made of grass fibres plaited together were in use before the invention of any apparatus to facilitate the carding and spinning of wool. The people of China, Arabia, Assyria, and Egypt excelled in the manufacture of woollen fabrics, and were skilled in the art of decorating the same with embroidery. In Egypt woollen textiles were highly appreciated, some of them being so extremely fine in quality as to resemble silk. There are but few specimens of ancient woollens in existence, owing, probably, to the ravages committed by the moth ; indeed, an ancient law of Egypt forbade the use of woollen fabrics as wrappings for the dead, owing to the rapidity with which they became destroyed. The two qualities of woollen thread that we distinguish as "worsted" and "crewels" have both been found in scraps of Egyptian and Greek embroideries.

Wool has from the earliest times been considered as the fitting material for carpet weaving, the pile carpets woven by the Saracens meeting

with no rivals. Carpets and tapestry being so nearly allied, it is plainly seen how woollen threads became used for wall hangings in preference to any others.

Beautiful though their woollen fabrics were, it was for linen textiles that the ancient Egyptians bore an untarnished reputation, the annual floods of the Nile proving specially advantageous to the growth of the flax. Many of the linen robes and mummy wrappings in existence are as strongly and evenly woven as anything we have at the present day. Some of these fabrics are so fine as to have one hundred and fifty threads to the inch,—far more than we can count in one of our finest pocket-handkerchiefs; and indeed cambric, as we know it, was made in Egypt and India many hundreds of years before the secret of weaving it found its way to Europe. The Egyptians traded largely with linen to all civilised lands.

In Europe the art of linen weaving was of comparatively early introduction, Italy taking the lead, and Flanders following her closely in proficiency in the art. In England linen-weaving seems to have attained a high state of perfection during the Saxon period, and after that to have in great measure died out until the thirteenth century, when several

monarchs in succession made valiant efforts to induce Flemish weavers to set up their looms in the country. Ireland has long held a reputation for the manufacture of linen goods ; indeed, it may be said to date from the eleventh century. Until the end of the last century, in both Scotland and England, every housewife spun her flax and wool as a matter of course, the thread being woven either by a weaver in the nearest village or by a workman, who collected the thread, giving woven material in exchange, as he journeyed from place to place. It is the decadence of this hand-made linen which Mr. Ruskin has so deeply deplored ; and the Langdale linen, so much appreciated by embroideresses, is the outcome of his efforts to revive the industry (see p. 53) in the Lake district of England.

Flax threads have ever been more largely used for the purposes of embroidery than cotton, being far more durable, and, when dyed, more lasting also as to colour. It is only since the deterioration in lace, caused by the invention of machinery for making it, that cotton threads have been used in its manufacture, causing it to be stiffer and more rigid when new, and poorer and more blurred when cleaned, than when made of flax.

Just as we are indebted to Egypt for our flax and

linen materials, so do we obtain our knowledge of cotton originally from India ; and, strange though it may appear, considering the acquaintance with most things possessed by the Egyptians, cotton, or "tree wool," as it was then called, was not cultivated there before the fourteenth century. The art of weaving cotton was well known in the South of Europe at an earlier date than this ; but in England it was not followed to any considerable extent till the seventeenth century, when it was introduced in this country after having made due progress through Italy and Flanders. From the comparative harshness of the texture of the fibre, and its tendency to swell when cleaned, and so to spoil the sharpness of the outlines upon which it is used, cotton materials have never received so much attention from embroideresses as have linen fabrics. The people of India are unrivalled in their skill in working upon their transparent muslins and cambrics ; and not only are these embroideries often executed with floss silk, but they are further enriched with beetles' wings and fine silver and gold thread.

The use of golden threads, both in embroidery and in weaving, is of almost as ancient a date as the loom itself. Phrygia was the country more famous than any other for work in gold wire ; hence

for many centuries the term "auriphrygium" was applied to embroidery itself, either with or without metal threads; hence, too, we get the perverted word "orphrey," still in common use in ecclesiastical needlework. The Phrygians are said to have taught the Egyptians, the Egyptians the Greeks and Hebrews, the Greeks the Romans; and so we get the usual chain of progress made by this and kindred arts throughout Europe.

In all Roman, Greek, Egyptian, and Persian history we find constant references to vestments inwrought with gold; and so stiff and heavy were many of these as literally to weigh the luckless wearer to the ground with fatigue. In the Psalms we find the description of the garb of Pharaoh's daughter —"her clothing is of wrought gold. She shall be brought unto the king in raiment of needlework." In such weaving the gold thread was usually flat, being beaten out very thin and cut into narrow strips. This was preferred to those materials in which a round wire was used, as the flat threads gave a more lustrous effect. It is supposed that Attalus II., King of Pergamos, was the first to invent the style of gold thread we use at the present day, which is formed of narrow strips twisted round a central thread of

cotton or silk, as described in the following lines from Claudian :—

> "The joyful mother plies her learned hands,
> And works all o'er the trabea golden bands;
> Draws the thin strips to all their length of gold,
> To make the metal meaner threads enfold."

Not in the form of thread and wire alone was gold used in early times ; it was also beaten out thin, and cut into plates and bosses of all sizes and shapes, to be used amongst the stitches of rich embroideries. Many of these devices were in the style of our filigree, and for the most part partook more of the nature of jewellery than of embroidery. Even at such a comparatively modern date as the time of Elizabeth these bosses were frequently employed, and a pair of gloves richly worked in this style was exhibited at the Stuart Exhibition some years ago. Little of such work is now left to us, probably owing to the wholesale robbery and destruction of all precious embroideries that have taken place at various times.

The metal threads used when English embroidery was in its prime were supposed to have been imported from India ; but our metal workers were not slow to invent threads made of baser material, with which, tempted by their comparative cheapness,

workers were content to decorate their embroideries, with the result that we rarely meet with any antique needlework the tinsel on which is otherwise than black and corroded by age. The fraud was carried to such an extent that strips of vellum gilded were not unfrequently sold as gold thread ; and it is no uncommon thing to find whole sections of a design overlaid with gold foil, instead of being covered with closely-woven lines of gold wire in the conscientious fashion in which the stole and maniple found amongst the wrappings of the body of St. Cuthbert at Durham are arranged.

CHAPTER II.

NEEDLEWORK OF THE OLDEN TIME.

"The beauteous queen revolv'd with careful eyes
Her various textures of unnumber'd dyes,
And chose the largest; with no vulgar art
Her own fair hands embroider'd every part.
Beneath the rest it lay divinely bright,
Like radiant Hesper o'er the gems of night."

Odyssey, Book xv.

SOME of the earliest pieces of needlework yet extant are preserved in the South Kensington Museum amongst the interesting collection of tapestry discovered about ten years ago at Akhmîm. The date of these textiles, to which I shall have occasion to refer later on, is fixed from between the first and ninth centuries, and therefore covers a considerable period. In the piece illustrated on page 21, which is supposed to have been intended for use as a panel inserted upon a linen robe, the outlines of the design are worked with the needle in yellowish flax, the remainder being woven with

ANCIENT EGYPTIAN WEAVING AND EMBROIDERY.

brownish purple wool in a similar fashion to the tapestry made at the present day. Gentlewomen who occupy their needles in outlining and partially filling in the woven designs of brocade or tapestry with coloured wools or silks, under the impression that it is a novel and effective kind of work, little think that the very same style of embroidery was in vogue amongst the inhabitants of Egypt nearly two thousand years ago.

Some of these ancient pieces of tapestry and needlework combined are very interesting, as showing precisely the manner in which they were originally worked. The general texture of the material much resembles what we now know as Turkish towelling, the ground being covered with a number of short loops of coarse worsted. According to Mr. Alan Cole, who has made a special study of these textiles, the length of the loops was regulated by a reed which was tacked into position on the right side of the linen, this being stretched in a frame. The needle was brought up, taken over the reed, and back again to the wrong side, just opposite the place at which it came up. Thus the reed plays exactly the same part as the small ivory or wooden mesh used for netting, and such as we still employ for working plush stitch and several

others on canvas. It is probable that some sort of knot or small stitch was made in the linen between the loops, or they would soon have become pulled out of shape.

From these very early times, unfortunately, we have but the merest fragments of the actual work remaining until we approach what is in comparison modern date. The elaboration of the costumes of the figures on the vases and sculpture of the ancient Assyrians, Babylonians, Greeks, and Romans proves that these nations were as skilled in embroidery as in other arts ; and we read in the classics of the rich needlework included amongst the spoils of conquered nations, and of the magnificent robes given to monarchs by visitors from other lands. A few scraps of very early Greek embroideries are preserved in the Hermitage at St. Petersburg.

We are familiar, too, from Scripture, with the hangings of the tabernacle and the garments of the priests, which show that the Jews had at least learnt much from the Egyptians during the captivity. The funeral tent of Queen Isi-em-Kebs, mother-in-law of Shishak, whose daughter became wife to King Solomon, and who took Jerusalem in the time of King Rehoboam and plundered the Temple, is preserved in the Boulak Museum. It may be

described as "leather patchwork" or "kid mosaic," as it consists of thousands of tiny pieces of kid, dyed in many colours, and arranged to form patterns, amongst which hieroglyphics, figures of animals, birds, and flowers play a prominent part. The embroidered inscription bearing reference to the original purpose of the canopy has been deciphered, without much difficulty, by Egyptologists. Precisely the same kind of work is described as being executed at the present day by the natives of various parts of India.

We constantly find allusions in the classics to embroidered sails; and those of Cleopatra's galley in particular seem to have been of the richest materials, and ornate with embroidery. Tents and pavilions, again, afforded immense scope for decoration, the outside as well as the inside being sumptuously fitted up.

The Danes, when they conquered Northumbria, bore before them in the battle a banner worked by the princesses in "one noontide's while," we are told, which was held in the greatest veneration by the troops. The sacred raven pictured thereon was firmly believed to predict a victory or the reverse, according to whether it was seen to flutter its wings or to droop them listlessly and hang its head.

Most of the Anglo-Saxon queens have a reputation for being good embroideresses; among others, Athelstan's four sisters, Queen Edgitha, wife of Edward the Confessor, and Queen Emma, wife of Canute. In fact, from the seventh to the tenth centuries the work of English embroideresses was celebrated over the whole of the civilised world. The unsettled condition of the country caused by the various incursions of the Picts and Scots, Danes and others, while they lasted, arrested the pursuit of all arts of peace.

The introduction of Christianity gave a fresh impetus to embroidery; and the women whose pleasure it had hitherto been to work battle standards for their warrior lords now turned their attention to preparing hangings for the churches, or banners and vestments for the priests. The nuns, in particular, spent much of their time in this pursuit; and their productions were sold to other countries, greatly to the advantage of the establishments to which the workers belonged. That needlework was by no means held of small account is proved by the interest taken in it by no less a person than St. Dunstan himself, who to his other talents added those for drawing and painting. At the earnest persuasion of a lady, by name Hedelwyrme, he is

said to have made a drawing of a priestly vestment, and not only to have painted it, but to have superintended its reproduction with the needle. Some say that the painting was made on the linen canvas itself, the stitches being laid over it. Our workers, as well as the noble Hedelwyrme, know the value of a well-executed cartoon from which to copy, and many of our greatest artists think it in nowise beneath them to prepare these, and to overlook the workmanship.

The stole and maniple found amongst the bones of St. Cuthbert, when the body was exhumed in 1827, and still preserved at Durham, are said to be of Saxon workmanship. The background of the stole is woven in pure gold thread, with spaces left at intervals for the insertion of small panels of embroidery, such as are often seen in the orphreys of ecclesiastical vestments. In "St. Cuthbert," by Dr. Raine, will be found an interesting description of these embroideries. Upon the ends of the stole is an inscription to the effect that Ælfflaed (Ethelfleda), daughter of Alfred the Great, and sister of Edward the Elder, ordered it to be worked for Bishop Fridestan (or Frithestan), who was made Bishop of Winchester in 905. This fixes approximately the date of the embroidery.

In 934 King Althelstan visited the shrine of the holy St. Cuthbert, and laid upon it many choice and valuable gifts, amongst which, it is supposed, were these embroidered stoles. From the scraps illustrated here may readily be understood the character of the design, the workmanship of which, though the silks are discoloured and faded, still bears witness to the skill of the embroideress.

Another of these early achievements of our ancestresses is the Dalmatic belonging to King Charlemagne, now in the Vatican. This is worked on a background of thick silk of a dark blue colour, and displays on the front Christ in glory, surrounded by saints, angels, and children. The Transfiguration is worked at the back, and between these pictures the ground is sprinkled or powdered with crosses within circles. The stitches used are principally laid stitches, and split stitch and gold and silver thread are largely employed. The work has been carefully restored where this does not interfere with the beauty of the embroidery. Bertha, the mother of Charlemagne, was noted as an embroideress, and one wonders whether this splendid vestment can be looked upon as an example of her skill. A coloured photograph

of this Dalmatic is to be seen in the South Kensington Museum.

Small wonder is it that the Normans considered the acquisition of our little country worth some exertion, for the abbeys, churches, and palaces teemed with the gorgeous productions of the Anglo-Saxon gentlewomen, and were rich in illuminations, plate, and textiles. Certainly any embroideries of the period that are left to us are far superior in design, general plan, and execution to the much-talked-of Bayeux tapestry, which, it is to be presumed, may be taken as a type of the needle-craft then in vogue on the Continent. The amount of work contained in this, and the insight it gives us into the dresses, architecture, and many of the customs of the time, constitute its chief interest. It is wrongly named tapestry, as it is embroidery pure and simple, the material being in texture something between our canvas and home-made linen, finer than the one and coarser than the other. The details are worked in wool, the outlines being raised over a cord, and any fillings there may be are put in with flat stitches, similar to our satin stitch. The attitudes of the figures express a great amount of life and energy, but the drawing of the figures, houses, and other details is much what a

young child of average intelligence might nowadays produce upon its slate. The history of England, from the time of Edward the Confessor to the landing of the Conqueror, is depicted in a series of panels or scenes, the whole being twenty inches in width and two hundred and twenty-seven feet long, thus forming a sort of frieze. It contains five hundred and thirty figures, of which all but three are men. After Norman William's first visit to England he returned to his own country, with many Saxon gentlewomen in his train. It is supposed that, being themselves expert in the use of the needle, they were able to assist the queen or her ladies in the task of designing and working these scenes. One hardly likes to do away with the belief that Queen Matilda herself executed the work to while away the lonely hours while her husband was in England for the second time ; but the general opinion of experts nowadays is that she merely ordered it to be executed, some saying that the idea originated with her brother-in-law, Odo, Bishop of Bayeux.

From the twelfth century the embroideries left to us become more numerous ; and, besides those actually existing, the inventories of the possessions of noble families abound with entries which prove

that these embroideries were of sufficient value to be looked upon as "property" instead of merely of ephemeral worth, as is generally the case with the fancy needlework of to-day. It was the excellence of the embroideries that gained for England the titles of "A Garden of Delight," "A Well Inexhaustible,"—these being bestowed, it is said, by Pope Innocent III.

The famous Syon cope (see p. 31) is interesting, not only on account of the exquisite beauty of the workmanship, but because so many of its adventures are known to us. So varied are the vicissitudes through which it has passed that, had it been less conscientiously worked, it must have long ago dropped to pieces. It dates from about 1250, and is supposed to have been worked by the inmates of a religious house at Coventry. A certain Master or Doctor Gaunt presented the cope to the House of Syon, then newly founded by King Henry V., it being thought a pious act to give rich embroideries or textiles to the convents and monasteries. The Syon House Monastery became one of the richest in the kingdom, the brethren and sisters bearing a high character for piety, learning, and accomplishments. The scene changed at the Reformation, and the holy men and women were

THE SYON COPE.

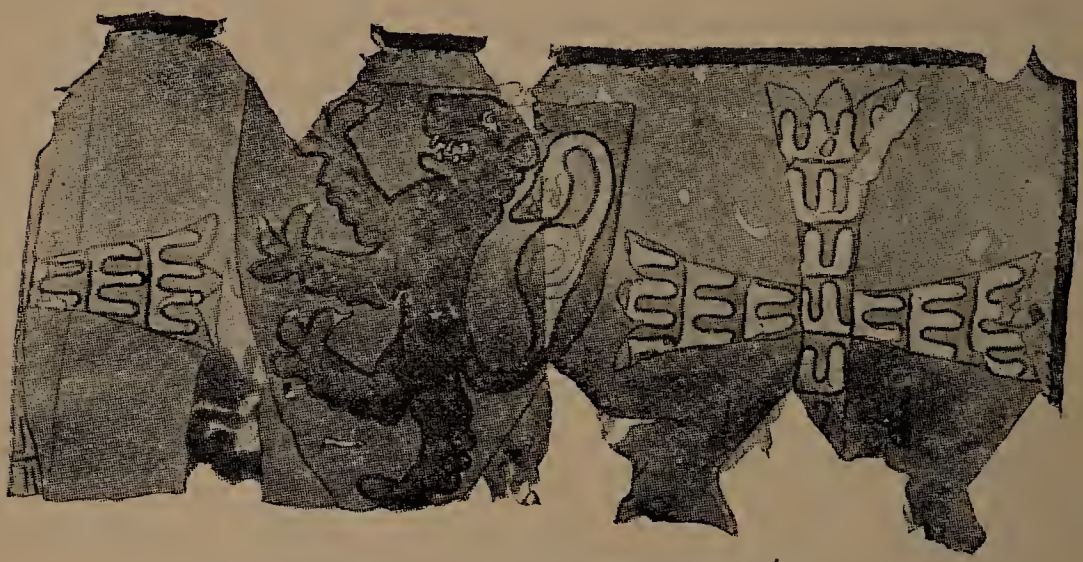
scattered to the four winds of heaven, one party of nuns bearing with them this cope, probably with as many other treasures as they could secure. They wandered hither and thither over the Continent, and settled finally in Lisbon. Here the convent was more than once severely injured by earthquakes, and the sisters were again forced to seek a new home. As late as 1825 some nuns of this order were living in England, and presented the cope to the Earl of Shrewsbury as a token of gratitude for kindness shown by him to them. It is now displayed, for the admiration of all the world (when there is light enough to enable it to be seen in its dark nook), in the South Kensington Museum.

The material upon which the embroidery is executed is simple enough, being nothing more nor less than coarse linen. The ground is entirely covered with stitches, except here and there, where the desired effect in a certain portion of the pattern is gained by leaving it unworked, and in another place where one of the figures has never been finished. As seen by the illustration, the design consists mainly of figures representing Christ and the Virgin, the apostles, and many saints and angels. These are enclosed in a series of medallions

or quatrefoils, the background of which is supposed to have been originally red; but this has faded into the soft brownish tint into which age generally changes this colour. The other medallions are filled with minor figures, such as those of angels of various ranks and degrees, and are green, the background being worked in *opus pulvinarium*, or cushion stitch. This is a series of short upright stitches, arranged in a chevron pattern, much in the way in which we still work the background of the finer kinds of canvas embroidery. The figures are worked in split stitch, which has the appearance of a very fine chain stitch.

The depressions in the cheeks and naked portions of the figures have given rise to much controversy, many authorities contending that these hollows were made by beginning in the middle of the space to be filled, and working round in a circular direction, until the stitches were able to fall in with the outlines of the design. The idea is, that the hollows were then made by pressing the work on the right side with a small knob of heated metal. Any one who tries it will, however, find that no knob is required to induce such stitches to form hollows or depressions of the kind, but that if the work is tightly executed they fall thus

naturally into place. It is probable that if the iron were used at all it would be more with the idea of making these hollows permanent than with that of forming them in the first instance. The cope, at some time or other, must have been cut in, probably when it was about half a century old, and the border added. This represents the coats of



SCRAP OF ANTIQUE APPLIQUÉ.

arms of many of the noble families of the time, and affords much interest to students of heraldry. This portion is worked on fine canvas in cross stitch. It has been suggested that these coats of arms are those of knights who had made solemn vows to fight in the East against the enemies of Christianity.

The scrap of antique appliqué shown above dates also from the thirteenth century, and is supposed to

have once formed the lining or cover of a shield. The arms are those of William de Fortibus, third Earl of Albemarle, those of his wife, Isabella de Redvers, Countess of Devon, being quartered with them. The lion and crosses are sable, the latter embattled *or*. The field is also *or*, and the design is outlined with a fine red cord. A very similar shield cover must have been that made by the "lily maid of Astolat" for Lancelot's shield, for she, we are told,—

> . . . "Fashioned for it
> A case of silk, and braided thereupon
> All the devices blazon'd on the shield
> In their own tinct." . . .

And further on in the poem an allusion is made to the "azure lions, crown'd with gold, ramp in the field." Though we prize such remnants of past customs, it is much to be regretted that we know so little of their history and of the scenes in which they have actually taken part. That such an embroidery as this exactly repeated the colours and designs of the armour itself may be taken for granted, as in many of the tombs of the period that have been opened of late years the dress of the occupant was found to be precisely like that carved upon the outside of the tomb, or worked in em

broideries of the time. For example, we have the crimson velvet *gamboisé* surcoat of Edward the Black Prince, hanging above his tomb in Canterbury Cathedral, which is exactly like that on the recumbent figure. In the same way, the remains of King John at Worcester were found to be clothed precisely as is the sculptured representation outside the tomb.

During the Middle Ages, ladies still found ample occupation in working for their warrior husbands and for the Church, and had an immense choice of subjects for reproduction with the needle in scenes from Scripture, from the siege of Troy, and from the adventures of many knights who had performed chivalric deeds, those related by the minstrels or troubadours being the favourites. The education of no young girl was considered complete till she had spent some time in a "shee schoole," and had learnt all the intricacies of embroidery with silks and gold thread. As Fuller quaintly puts it in his "Church History," "Whilst monks' *pens* were thus employed, nuns with their *needles* wrote histories also: that of Christ His passion for their altar cloths, and other Scripture (and more legend) stories in hangings to adorn their houses." Little by little the bareness of the houses began to be veiled with hangings, the benches and chairs were made not

only more ornamental, but more luxurious, by coverings of rich material; the beds were hung with curtains elaborately worked with figures, flowers, or animals, and the coverlet, pillows, and cushions were not forgotten.

At the same time, noble ladies wore trains magnificently wrought; and the men, when they laid aside their armour, were no less gaily attired; their horses were resplendent in trappings of velvet worked thickly with gold, and the very dogs wore collars embroidered with pearls and precious stones. With the increased luxury and splendour lavished upon the work the designs frequently lost their purity of style, and became coarser and more artificial; the symbolism that was looked upon almost as a duty amongst the early workers gradually disappeared, and where followed at all was too often clumsily introduced.

After the fifteenth century, other nations became formidable rivals of England as far as embroidery was concerned, and the specimens we have left belonging to this period show that Italy, Spain, and Flanders far surpassed us in beauty of execution and detail, and that our embroideresses occupied themselves with imitating their work instead of resting content with the pure Gothic designs and simple stitches for which

they had established a reputation. The pall belonging to the Fishmongers' Company shows traces of the foreign influence that was soon to overpower the national taste, and its general style, both of workmanship and design, scarcely bears out the statement that this pall was used in the time of Richard II. at the funeral of Sir William Walworth. One of the ends is shown on page 39. Here is represented St. Peter clothed in full pontifical robes, enthroned, and in the act of blessing two angels, who, kneeling, are swinging censers before the saint. The execution of this pall is most elaborate, the varieties of the gold thread couchings alone being worthy of notice. The wings of the kneeling angels are delicately wrought in peacocks' feathers, gold, crimson, and light blue being used for the robes, which are worked in long and short stitch, the faces being in split stitch. The whole is in a wonderfully good state of preservation.

One of the best pieces of work of the reign of King Henry VII. is the Stoneyhurst cope, which many may remember as having been exhibited at the Tudor Exhibition. This vestment is known to have been made at Florence, and was left by Henry VII. "to God, St. Peter, and to the abbot and prior and convent of our monastery of West-

minster." The background of this cope is cloth-of-gold, ornamented with leafy branches bearing Tudor

END OF PALL BELONGING TO THE FISHMONGERS' COMPANY.

roses, and enclosing the portcullis and crown of England. These are of crimson velvet, the pile of

which is dotted with tiny loops of fine gold thread, these forming a characteristic of the Florentine velvets of the period.

With the exception of some stormy years, as during the Wars of the Roses, when such peaceful arts were laid aside by all but the occupants of the convents, the treasures of the abbeys and churches continued to increase in number and in splendour till the time of the Reformation, when, with one fell swoop, Church embroidery received a deadly blow, and sank into disuse, not to be revived until the middle of this present century. With the suppression of the monasteries in 1536 and 1539 many rich pieces of needlework were destroyed amongst other valuables, partly for the sake of the jewels and gold used upon them, partly from motives of religious zeal. Those few that escaped the fury of the iconoclasts were carried away by the scattered nuns and monks to the Continent, where some specimens may still be found, thus accounting for the presence at Sens of Thomas à Becket's vestments, and at Valence, in Spain, for that of some of the sacerdotal garments of which the Stoneyhurst Cope once formed a part.

Several of the wives of Henry VIII. introduced varieties of design and new methods of executing

embroidery, which they had learned during the time of their education in foreign courts. Queen Katherine of Aragon taught the English dames a dainty style of work on white linen with fine black silk, interspersed with gold thread woven into stitches similar to those used now in lace-making. A legend relates, that when called before Wolsey and Campeggio to answer to the accusation of Henry, when he first thought of divorcing her, she had a skein of red silk round her neck. The gentlewomen of to-day do not consider this the best way of keeping their silk when in use, but upholsteresses and carpet-makers generally carry their thread thus. Several specimens of the embroidery executed by this queen are in existence, and are still known as "Spanish work."

Anne Boleyn had learnt much at the French court; and Anne of Cleves, it is said, introduced geometric designs worked on canvas in flat stitches, such as are often known as "cushion" stitches (*opus pulvinarium*); but similar work is in the possession of Dr. J. Harley, which is known to have been executed by Queen Katherine of Aragon. This represents birds, insects, fruit and flowers, and is evidently the forerunner of Berlin woolwork.

Queen Mary in great measure kept to the style of

embroidery introduced by Katherine of Aragon; but in the reign of her successor all needlework, and indeed any art or occupation that was in any way Spanish in character, was discountenanced. Mary Queen of Scots, as is well known, was an accomplished embroideress, and presented many pieces of work to Queen Elizabeth with a view of softening the feelings of her hard-hearted cousin, doubtless finding solace in the use of the needle during her miserable periods of captivity. Some of these pieces of work are not so well executed as are some of the earlier specimens, and one can almost imagine that the needle was pulled hastily through and through the material as the unfortunate queen smarted under some fresh indignity inflicted on her by Bess of Hardwicke, or some other of her persecutors. Many such pieces of her embroidery are left, several of which are familiar to us from their having been lent to the Exhibition of Tudor relics.

Queen Elizabeth herself was an embroideress of no mean order, and that she took more than common interest in the art is proved by the fact of her instituting a Guild or Company of the Broiderie of London, which is still in existence. Miss Freer, in her life of Henri IV., quotes a pretty greeting sent by Queen Elizabeth with a

scarf she had worked for that king, and which would serve as a model for a similar message nowadays. "Its value is nought in comparison to the dignity of the personage for whom it is destined," says the Queen; "but I supplicate you to hide its defects under the wings of your good charity, and to accept my little present in remembrance of me." Several books, the covers of which are known to have been worked by Queen Elizabeth, are shown in our museums. There are one or two in the British Museum, and two in the Bodleian, where one in particular, "The Glasse of the Synneful Soul," was worked by Elizabeth when only eleven years old, and has the initials K. P. at the sides, which show, together with an inscription inside the book, that it was worked for a gift to Queen Katherine Parr. It is rather an elaborate undertaking for a little girl of eleven, and the young princess must have had a considerable amount of help in intertwining the complicated arrangement of the gold and silver braid on the cover.

The history of France is so intimately bound up with that of our own country that it is interesting to note that, although the art had developed there much later than with us, the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries were the golden age of needlework.

Catherine de Medicis, Jeanne d'Albret, Marie de Medicis, Anne of Austria, and Marie Thérèse were experts in the art, and the most eminent designers were employed to prepare cartoons for the embroideries of the queens and the ladies of their courts. Catherine de Medicis, who, we are told, passed the afternoons in executing silk embroidery, "in which her skill was as perfect as could be," had a designer in her suite, by name Frédéric de Vinciolo, well known to workers from the many designs for lace to which his name is affixed in the old pattern books.

Floral designs were most appreciated in the embroidery; but towards the end of the sixteenth century the embroideresses grew tired of familiar subjects, and a horticulturist, Jehan Robin, co-operated, it is said, with Pierre Vallet, embroiderer to the king, and founded a botanic garden, in which they formed a collection of novel and wonderful plants, to be reproduced by the court ladies with their needles. Jehan Robin received the title of "Herboriste du Roy," and the queen and her ladies were frequent visitors to his garden. In a Prayer Book belonging to Anne de Bretagne are represented nearly three hundred different flowers and plants, all rendered with due consideration for nature.

Of Jeanne d'Albret an anecdote is told, which will appeal to the secret sympathy of many active-minded people who are obliged to listen week after week to the platitudes of a not too clever orator. The queen, it is said, fell into the bad habit of falling asleep during the sermon ; and when this was represented to her as, to say the least of it, a bad compliment to the preacher, she declared that could she but work at her embroidery during the sermon she could keep awake, and be better able to follow the discourse. The necessary sanction was, of course, given.

During the reign of Louis XIV. there arose in France a perfect furore for embroidery of all kinds. The Queen, Marie Thérèse, was encouraged in following the art by the King, who himself was well able to embroider. Madame de Maintenon, as we know, established an atelier at St. Cyr for the instruction of her young protégées in all varieties of embroidery ; and she herself was glad to put on her glasses and bring out her needlework while driving with the King. Madame de Pompadour set the fashion for tambour work, which had then recently been introduced from China ; and a portrait of her, by Drouais, at Hampton Court, represents her as engaged in this favourite occupation.

Towards the end of the reign of Louis XV. the scene changed. It became necessary to retrench ; and ladies mercilessly, and with a zeal worthy of a better cause, ripped and unravelled rich embroideries of all sorts, divided the gold and silver from the silks, and sold them. As late as 1772 gentlewomen were in the habit of getting up "parfilage" parties, nothing with a grain of gold in its composition escaping destruction. Officers' uniforms were specially prized ; and Madame de Maintenon gives a humorous account of a young military man who unwarily found himself in the midst of one of these gatherings, from which he was not suffered to depart until he had been robbed of his finery—epaulettes, sword-knots, etc. A box containing implements, *à parfiler*, was looked upon in the same light as a well-stocked workcase of the present day ; and few *étrennes* were better appreciated than scraps of old embroideries or uniforms to be torn to shreds, and sold to the advantage of the owner.

This state of affairs continued through the troublous time of the French Revolution, during which there was little leisure or inclination for fancy work. Several pieces of embroidery are left that were executed by Marie Antoinette and her ladies. These

are often on a white silk background, chenilles of delicate colouring being used instead of twisted silk. Some of these pieces are so evenly executed as to resemble actual velvet rather than stitchery. About this time, a considerable amount of embroidery was performed by men, even the soldiers in the barracks busying themselves in working, and increasing their scanty pay by the sale of their productions. The low ebb of prosperity then setting in both in France and England caused embroidery to become almost a lost art, only reappearing at rare intervals as some isolated individual showed a special facility for executing it.

In the days of James I., the needlework most highly prized in England was that known as "embroidery on the stump." The most elaborate specimens are those always supposed to have been executed by the nuns of Little Gidding. Many examples of this work, mounted generally as caskets and mirror frames, still remain, and are regarded with more amusement than admiration, so devoid are they of all regard for the laws of perspective, proportion, and colour. The designs usually comprise representations of fruit, flowers, insects, animals, and figures of men and women, which, with the exception, generally, of a central

group, are arranged in a "happy-go-lucky" style upon the material. They are raised high above the background by means of a padding of wool or hair; but in some instances the faces are carved in wood, and worked over with silks. The models thus made are dressed as elaborately as any dolls; the caps, hats, dresses, ruffles, and shoes being represented in detail, and frequently fashioned of fine knitting, and silk, satin, and braid. One of the best specimens of stump embroidery is in the possession of Lady Charlotte Schreiber, and bears the date 1677. The curtains of a tent, in which is seated King Charles II., are of real lace; his cloak is lined with feathers to represent ermine, and Queen Catherine of Braganza wears a white satin dress embroidered with flowers and leaves. Other caskets of about the same date are elaborately worked with purl or bullion, made not like ours, merely of tinsel thread, but of fine wire, wound round with silk of various colours. The numerous insects and animals raise a smile, for the butterflies are not unfrequently as large as the bodies of the ladies from neck to waist; acorns and strawberries are each as large as the heads of the figures, while animals, which happen to be placed dangerously near the edge of the work, have to suffer fearful

contortions in order that they may fit into their allotted space. The work must have been extremely difficult to execute, and it is therefore not surprising that it should have lasted in vogue for a very short time only.

Although the Court of Charles I. was luxurious and extravagant in the extreme, the civil wars gave no opportunity for the execution of embroideries, and under Cromwell plain needlework alone was executed by the Puritan maidens. There are a few sets of hangings left of the reign of Queen Anne, which show that work on linen with crewels was executed here and there ; but the designs are overcrowded, and, as a rule, the workmanship is cumbrous. Work achieved by Queen Mary was, until lately, preserved at Hampton Court ; but the greater part of the embroideries of her reign were heavy in style, and stiff with gold thread raised high over a padding. Queen Adelaide was a clever embroideress, according to the fashion of the day ; and a considerable amount of good work was executed for Queen Charlotte by the inmates of the Clergy Orphan School, some of which is still to be seen at Hampton Court.

In the time of George III., Miss Linwood's Exhibition excited considerable attention. Her em-

broideries consisted of portraits of celebrities and copies of the works of the old masters executed in worsted. They were wonderful examples of patience and of the imitative faculty; but she erred in trying to reproduce oil paintings, the needlework being framed in the same way. Her largest "picture" was executed when Miss Linwood was in her seventy-fifth year. The "Salvator Mundi," after Carlo Dolci, is considered the finest specimen of her work. For this, it is said, she refused an offer of £3,000, and at her death, in 1845, at the age of ninety, she bequeathed it to Queen Victoria. Charles Dickens thus humorously describes a visit to Miss Linwood's Exhibition: "We" (Peggotty and David Copperfield) "varied the legal character of our proceedings by visiting Miss Linwood's Exhibition, which I remember as a Mausoleum of needlework, favourable to self-examination and repentance."

The troubles caused by the Continental wars during the early part of this century quite put a stop to any expenditure of money upon luxury, and the arts and sciences were almost entirely neglected. Protection was in full force, so that nothing to rouse emulation was brought into the country; and the arrest of progress in every way so impoverished lovers

of art as well as others, that little or no money could be expended upon anything that was not an absolute necessity. For several years, Berlin woolwork alone was executed, and women were content to portray upon their canvas apoplectic lap-dogs, gay birds, and impossible flowers and fruits. It was reserved for the ladies of the middle of the Victorian age to revive the decayed art, and to produce embroideries vying both in design and execution with those of the olden time.

CHAPTER III.

THE EMBROIDERY OF THE VICTORIAN AGE.

"A woman sitting unemployed, and in a state of total idleness, seems to assume the attitude of a man; but in so doing she loses the grace which characterises her sex."—MME. DE GENLIS.

IF we are to look upon embroidery as the art of enriching and ornamenting a material that is already complete as far as it goes, as opposed to tapestry and lace, the first thing to be considered is this material, and how far it is appropriate and suitable for the design to be placed upon it, and the purpose for which it is destined. Most modern workers concur in the opinion that linen for all ordinary purposes takes first rank as a foundation for embroidery, whether executed with silk, wool, or floss. It must be understood that this linen is not such as can be obtained at any draper's for a few pence per yard—though, it is to be confessed, there are many worse materials to be had even than this—but a really good "old-fashioned" linen, without a vestige of "dress" about it. When such a fabric

can be obtained, it will be found to improve with age and use ; its colour is soft and pearly, quite unlike the raw whiteness of ordinary bed and table linen.

There are no embroidery linens equal to those manufactured in Westmoreland under the auspices of Mr. Ruskin, who says : "A subject which is of the deepest interest to me is the success of Mr. Albert Fleming in bringing back the old industry of the spinning-wheel to the homes of Westmoreland, greatly increasing their happiness, and effectively their means of support, by the sale, already widely increasing, of the soundest and fairest linen fabrics that care can weave or field-dew blanch." The history of the revival of the industry is interesting, as an example of perseverance in overcoming innumerable difficulties. There was the trouble, first of all, in finding any one acquainted with the almost obsolete art of spinning; then the collection of old wheels and the making of new ones had to be undertaken, and followed by the actual spinning, weaving, and bleaching. The enterprise has at last met with a very fair amount of success ; and the linen produced by the cottagers of Langdale is good and substantial in quality, and thoroughly satisfactory as to colour. The widest width yet made is forty-five inches, and its price four shillings a yard.

A recent achievement is the making of a very fine linen of picked thread, which is an almost exact reproduction of the Egyptian mummy cloth. This costs eight and sixpence a yard, thirty-two inches wide, and ten shillings if thirty-eight inches wide. Ordinary middle-class workers will be likely to consider these high prices to pay for a mere linen material; but if they give a little thought to the matter, they will surely find it far better economy to produce per annum one thoroughly good piece of embroidery, such as will last their own lives and those of their children and grandchildren after them, than to invest in several commonplace specimens, such as can be had by a dozen other women, and will look poor and miserable after a twelvemonth's wear. This remark applies to most of the articles of fancy work sold at the shops. It stands to reason that, prepared as these are by the wholesale dealers by the gross, there is little or no room for originality in either design or workmanship; and the very knowledge that there are dozens of pieces of work exactly like the one she herself is engaged upon, at any rate as to design, will prevent an intelligent worker from taking the amount of interest necessary to enable her to execute it thoroughly well.

One of the best of the more moderately priced materials is the Rhodes linen, sold by the agents of the Comptoir Alsacien de Broderie. This is of a soft "old ivory" tint, and, as the threads are all tolerably even, it lends itself well to the execution of drawn thread work, and certain of the more elaborate and smaller geometric stitches. Some of the coloured linens woven by Messrs. Murphy & Orr of Belfast, and by Messrs. Harris & Sons, of flax-thread renown, are well adapted for an embroidery executed with white linen threads; the paler shades of red, the old-gold and pale blue are, as a rule, the most successful colours.

Of the more fanciful makes of linen little need be said. They are, as a rule, got up attractively to suit a passing fashion; and though they are admired and bought by a certain class of the community, they are neither so substantial nor so satisfying as their plainer but less pretentious relations.

Linen, as I have before said, lends itself well to embroidery with either flax, wool, or silk. Flax is more specially suited for the finer kinds of embroideries, such as are required for pillow covers, the edges of sheets, dainty serviettes, d'oyleys and tea-cloths, and for the fair white linen used in the

sacramental services. Wool looks most effective when very large pieces are to be worked in bold trailing patterns, resembling some of the early English chintzes. As a rule these patterns are worked in one or two shades of the same colour only, variety being gained by the stitches employed. Of late, however, some very beautiful embroideries have been executed by the Royal School of Art Needlework in colours upon linen; the designs, taken from old chintzes, being completely filled in with closely set stitches. These have proved a great success. When silk is used upon linen the material should be entirely covered with stitches, and of such a character is the very exquisite "Rose and Lattice" panel opposite. This was designed and worked by Miss May Morris, and kindly lent for reproduction here by the firm of Morris & Co., of Oxford Street. From the illustration, unfortunately, no idea can be obtained of the most artistic scheme of colouring followed in this panel. The ground is entirely covered with darning in green, the lines being set closely together, and only one thread of the linen taken up with each stitch. The leaves are in shades of grey green, some being simply defined with a line of darning worked with dark green; others with a couching of silk of a deep

shade of purple or puce, caught down with green. The flowers are also worked in darning, the turned-over portion of the petals being in satin stitch. The flowers are thrown slightly into relief with a line of dark purple silk like the leaves. At the base of the panel spring some tulips worked with laid stitches of dull red, shaded with a darker tone, and barred with lines of yellow sewn with red. The leaves are of a bluish shade

ROSE AND LATTICE PANEL, BY MISS MAY MORRIS.

of green. The fritillaries, which, together with the tulips, look as if they have been taken from the pages of Gerarde or of some other ancient herbal, are worked with the puce shade and a dull peacock blue; others are indigo. The bands of lattice work are executed with laid stitches of blue, crossed with a very pale shade of apricot, and sewn with white, green, or dull pink cross stitches. The band is intersected here and there by three lines of silk, two white and one rose coloured, sewn with green. In the lower border are dull red flowers worked in laid stitches, sewn with a paler shade; the stems are whitish, and the pale green leaves contrast well with the duller green background. In the upper border are flowing stems and small leaves of pale green darning; the flowers are white, shaded slightly with green. The lattice work of the lower part of the panel is repeated here. The narrow borders all round show the most careful attention to detail, and are worthy of close inspection. First is a band of dull bluish green dotted with pink, then two lines of green flecked with a paler shade, two lines each of three shades of red, four lines of white dotted with green, and four more lines of dark bluish green. The rose design is, of course, treated entirely from a con-

ventional point of view, but is well balanced and suggestive. The panel may be described as a veritable poem embodied in needlework, and I have not been able to resist the temptation of giving this minute description of it. The *tout ensemble* is nearly perfect, and shows that Miss Morris has imbibed much of the true spirit, following the example of conscientious execution, set by the old experts in the art. The whole of the work is done with coarsely twisted silk, scarcely any of which appears on the wrong side. The panel should be lived with to be thoroughly appreciated, new beauties being discovered continually.

The Decorative Needlework Society has a speciality in the form of a very soft but substantial material, known as Early English linen, which is pearly white, and has a slightly glossy surface. It is well suited for working with heavy designs in crewel, such as have already been described for hangings ; and as it almost exactly reproduces the texture of the real old fabric, it is also convenient for mounting antique work upon, such as has been worn away by wear and tear from its original background. This material is seventy-two inches wide, and costs seven and sixpence a yard.

Canvas of various kinds has been largely used

of late for embroideries, some of which are coarse imitations of ancient Scandinavian, others of Turkish and Persian work. The fault of many of these is that too much of the canvas is allowed to show beyond and between the stitches; the fact being that few canvases are intended to be used otherwise than as a foundation for closely-set stitches. At the same time, the Fates forbid that we should ever return to the atrocities of Berlin woolwork executed in the days of our grandmothers. Another mistake commonly made is that of tracing upon canvas flowing but conventional patterns, which are frequently followed and filled with outline, long and short and similar stitches, for which such a severe —if I may so express it—material as canvas is not in the least degree suitable. There are at least a dozen varieties of cross stitch, besides many other geometric and mosaic stitches, appropriate for this material, and the design used should partake of the same character. Heraldic patterns, for instance, may well be carried out in this way, and there are plenty of conventional borders to be copied from specimens of old work in the South Kensington Museum and elsewhere. At Messrs. Howell and James's annual exhibition of antique embroideries are generally to be obtained scraps of such borders,

which serve admirably as models for the every-day worker.

Silk materials are little used for the larger articles which can be ornamented with embroidery; though nothing equals them for the dainty stitchery needed for handkerchief sachets, caskets, book-covers, and the like. For these it is better to choose a silk with as little gloss on it as possible than one with a highly glazed surface, such as that of satin. At Liberty's, Stephens', Goodyer's, and other houses, where a speciality is made of artistic fabrics, a worker must be hard indeed to please if she cannot find something to satisfy her both in tint and texture.

Many brocaded materials were used by the old embroideresses, and our modern workers have not been slow in following their example. The effect of the embroidery is very pleasing upon such a fabric, especially when the design of this serves as a faint reflex of the other, or is so slight as not to deteriorate in any way from the effect of the needle-work. On such a material as the latter was worked the quilt designed and mounted by the Decorative Needlework Society as a silver-wedding gift to the Princess of Wales by the ladies of Radnorshire. It is illustrated on page 62. The background

was of cream-coloured brocade, which has a small pattern all over it; the embroidery was executed with floss silk, and outlined with silver. Being the

QUILT IN THE POSSESSION OF THE PRINCESS OF WALES.

work of about twenty ladies, it had to be worked in sections, which were afterwards joined.

The notion of following the pattern upon a printed fabric is by no means to be despised by a

worker who does not possess a sufficiency of artistic skill to enable her to prepare her own designs. It is owing entirely to the exertions of Mr. and Mrs. Wardle that a great deal of beautiful embroidery is executed at the Leek Embroidery School upon printed silks and velveteens. Many of the Leek velveteens are splendid in design, and often display flowing scrolls, admirably suited for enrichment with needlework. The silks are generally printed in "all-over" designs, and find few rivals as portières where the portion of the pattern that is in the middle or field of the curtain is left plain, the design for a distance of some inches within the edges being richly worked over with silks and gold thread to form a border. A totally different, but equally effective, way of managing the embroidery upon a curtain is shown on p. 64. This is the design of the Royal School of Art Needlework. Here the material is velveteen, worked in a floral and scroll pattern with tapestry wools, shades of brown and olive predominating, the floral forms being lightened by a considerable quantity of white.

Materials having a pile, such as plush and velvet, can scarcely be recommended to untrained workers, for the cut surface renders it difficult to prevent the embroidery from losing a portion of its effect

by sinking into the pile. An amateur—and I do not venture to write for professional workers—will find, if her heart is set upon the use of velvet, that

CURTAINS DESIGNED AND WORKED BY THE ROYAL SCHOOL OF ART NEEDLEWORK.

she will get a good effect with the aid of arrasene, or some of the chenilles which have been brought forward again lately for the purpose. Unfortunately, however, the shades of colour in which these

are to be had are at present limited. Velvet is invaluable for appliqué; and it is to be regretted that for large pieces of work for which a broad, bold effect is needed this style of embroidery should be now so seldom executed. Serge or cloth forms an excellent background upon which the velvet designs can be applied, the rule in embroidery being always to place the richer material upon the poorer.

The woollen fabrics used as a background for fancy needlework are few in number. Diagonal cloth may be regarded as one of the most successful: art serge is serviceable, but partakes too much of the coarse nature of baize to be worth any very substantial embroidery. I have lately seen good work put upon fine twilled flannel; but here again arises the difficulty of procuring the material in an artistic range of colouring.

Threads to be used for embroidery have never been more varied than at present; and the worker will soon find that, as with the linen, the greatest economy is to buy the best that can be procured. A great many of the inexpensive silks that are in the market are objectionable by reason of their mixture with cotton or some inferior make of silk. Consequently, instead of mellowing with age, the

material mixed with the silk changes to a totally different colour to the rest, and the result is a shabby appearance which is never found in the better class fabrics. At the depôts of the Royal School of Art Needlework and of the Decorative Needlework Society a pure twisted silk is to be had which is soft and quite free from dress. The Leek embroidery silk may be depended on as being pure, and therefore likely to wear better than mixed threads, though there is a slight roughness about it to which some workers object. It is spun from the cocoons of the wild silkworms of India, in contradistinction to that which is spun from the cocoons of the cultivated worm. Much of the old embroidery was executed with floss silk, which is nowadays to be had in very perfect colouring. It is untwisted, and hence requires careful usage to keep it from fraying. No worker, for instance, who has been accustomed to prick her fingers over plain sewing should venture upon floss silk embroidery; and nothing more rigid than tissue paper should be laid over it while the work is in progress. From its soft and untwisted nature it is more particularly well suited for work in which many shades of the same colour are to be blended in any part of the design. The shades mingle almost imperceptibly

under the hands of a skilled worker, and the result is a broad band of stitches resting as closely and as regularly upon the material as though a piece of woven silk had been appliqué there. Floss is principally used in church work, and often for the faces, feet, and hands of figures, as it can be divided and subdivided until a sufficiently slender thread is obtained.

Crewels have undergone much change for the better since the revival of the art of embroidery, and are to be had in a vast range of good shades, which render them invaluable for certain classes of work. Many embroideresses object to the use of flax threads on the score of their being rough and unequal in texture. A great deal of this may be removed by holding the thread up against the light before using it. It will then be seen in which direction the rough hairs set, and the thread must next be passed through the needle so that they become pressed in a downward direction as the thread is drawn through and through the material.

We owe the gold thread we now use to the ingenuity of the Japanese, who manufacture it of gilded and burnished paper cut into very thin strips, and twisted round a core of soft silk or cotton. For

good work that twisted round a silken core is to be preferred to such as has a cotton foundation. The silk core is often red, and imparts to the gold a ruddy tinge, which gives an acceptable warmth to the work. There is an art in sewing it on which is not understood by a great many amateur workers. By giving the thread a frequent turn between the thumb and finger of the left hand, and in the right direction, the gold paper becomes so tightly twisted round the core that the edges of the gold are hidden, and the tinsel has all the unbroken effect of a solid metal wire. By following this simple plan the most intricate curves of a design may be accurately and sharply defined without any of that slovenly appearance so often seen in the productions of an untrained worker. There are several other kinds of gold thread to be had now, but all have a greater or lesser tendency to tarnish, and are not so brilliant as is the Japanese kind. What is known as "washing gold thread" is an extremely fine metal wire, which will stand a slight amount of cleaning if desired. It is tempting to express an opinion on the taste which prompts the use of tinsel upon washing materials; but I will resist it, and leave my readers to think the matter out for themselves. Gold purl or bullion is also much used for the

heavier kinds of embroidery and in church work; but amateurs do not accord it much favour, owing to its aptitude for tarnishing and the difficulty they have in manipulating it. It plays an important part in the ornamentation of state liveries, and of various ceremonial paraphernalia.

There is a very fine and tightly twisted make of silk known as "horsetail," which is useful for sewing on gold thread, as it is strong enough to withstand a sharp pull. It is to be had in several shades of colour to match every tint of gold. Spangles and jewels are used principally in church embroidery, and require very judicious treatment to escape a meretricious result. They can also scarcely be too small, and can never be too good in quality. I need hardly mention the modern "jewel" embroidery,—surely the acme of bad taste, which can hardly go further than the adornment of linen tea-cloths and canvas nightdress sachets with bits of coloured glass dignified by the name of jewels. No one who has ever seen a piece of really antique gem embroidery, or the excellent modern copies to be had at Helbronner's, for instance, will ever waste a second glance at the cheap horrors in many of our shops, which it is to be hoped will soon be relegated to the oblivion they deserve.

The designs reproduced in needlework have undergone considerable improvement of late years, alongside with that in the materials and the threads used upon them; but the scarcity of originality is as strongly marked now as in the early days of this nineteenth-century renaissance. The workers are,

PORTION OF EMBROIDERY DESIGNED BY THE LATE JOHN SEDDING, ESQ.

for the most part, quite content to follow slavishly in the footsteps of old designers, without apparently having the power of striking out a new line of action for themselves. An exception is to be found at the Royal School of Art Needlework, the Leek Embroidery Society, the Decorative Needlework Society, and several similar establishments, where

the designs used are often prepared by artists of high position and well-known excellence.

The design of the embroidery shown on page 70 was the work of the late Mr. John Sedding, and was executed by the Leek Society. The background is of gold-coloured Tussah silk, the principal colours used being dull red, white, a little blue, and shades of green. The design is well suited for curtains and hangings of medium size. It would lend itself admirably to the decoration of a small curtain, such as is often nowadays used across an open bookcase or corner cupboard. For such a purpose the design should not be too intricate, or the curtain so full as to prevent the beauty of the embroidery from being appreciated in spite of the folds in which it hangs.

A handsome border is that on page 72. This is Indian in character, and was worked on printed silk at the Leek Embroidery Society, the silk itself being manufactured by Mr. Thomas Wardle of the same town.

One cause of the want of any novelty or originality in amateurs arises from the disinclination many women have to take any trouble in the matter; the truth being, that to a connoisseur a piece of work designed, traced, and executed from beginning to end by the embroideress herself is, even if faulty,

possessed of far more interest, and indicative of far more individuality, than such as is sold already designed and planned. No worker who has once felt the intense pleasure there is in originating a design, and seeing it gradually develop beneath her fingers,

BORDER WORKED ON INDIAN SILK.

will ever again remain satisfied with executing the mere stitchery alone. Some of my readers may make the objection that "they never could draw"; quite oblivious of the fact that there are dozens, nay, hundreds, of simple designs they can produce with no more knowledge of drawing than is taught

at the humblest school in the country. I know one lady in particular who has scarcely learnt more than the elements of drawing, but who plans out most of her own fancy needlework, and with no mean result. She does not despise the mechanical aids to be had, and makes abundant use, when necessary, of tracing and transfer paper before her pattern is complete. This is for the more formal parts of the design, the rest being managed by the addition of a scroll here and a leaflet there, and so on, till a satisfactory whole is obtained. Many copies and suggestive drawings are made before she approaches her ideal; and the hours thus spent are far from being wasted, as she learns the weak parts of her work, and gains a wonderful amount of experience which proves valuable when the next piece is to be taken in hand.

In such work as this the design has a far better chance of success than when the draughtsman and embroideress work quite independently one of another. It is to be expected, also, that she who actually executes the stitches will have a more thorough acquaintance with the requirements of the material, and the style of design that is best suited to it, than one who simply prepares the pattern without any consideration for

its ultimate use. Amateur designers are too apt to fall over the stumbling-block of naturalism, and believe that their aim and object should be to produce with their needles a picture of flowers, birds, or fruits so realistically as to elicit admiration from all beholders. Many workers find a difficulty in producing the flatter designs, and it is therefore better for them to limit their achievements to such patterns as are so fully conventionalised that they scarcely show whence they take their origin. This will spare a beginner many troubles with the colouring as well as with the form.

Figure subjects should be strenuously avoided by every amateur; though occasionally one such inexperienced worker may succeed fairly well with outlined forms. Even then the features create a difficulty—a stitch placed in the smallest degree awry often altering the expression in a manner as ludicrous as it is undesirable.

Few embroideresses, too, and especially such as have had no professional training, could work such a delicate etching as that opposite, which the worker, Mrs. Lambert, late of Barden Park, Tunbridge, has kindly allowed me to reproduce here. The original embroidery is about thirteen inches high and nine inches wide, and is executed upon

white silk with the finest black silk, some of which is as fine as any hair. The beauty of the work can scarcely be appreciated in so small a production;

EMBROIDERED ETCHING.

but every one of the thousands of tiny stitches tells its own tale, and takes its own place in the effect of the whole. Such a piece as this would look admirable if mounted as a panel for the door of a

miniature cabinet, or for a small screen; but requires placing where it can conveniently receive the close inspection it deserves. Since the use of folding screens has become general, ladies have been quick to recognise the excellent field they offer for the display of good embroidery. For the panels, somewhat thin materials (such as linen, silk, brocatelle, or satin) should be used in preference to thicker fabrics (such as cloth, serge, or velvet); though very good results have occasionally been produced by these in the hands of professional embroideresses. There is more variety to be had in the designs for screen panels than in almost any other articles decorated with embroidery; these forming one of the few instances in which realistic and pictorial motives are admissible.

Mountmellick embroidery is the name given to a style of thick white stitchery introduced some sixty years ago by a worker in the little town of Mountmellick in Queen's County. The embroidery lingered for some years under the superintendence of this Johanna Carter, but after her death it showed signs of falling into disuse, until it was revived about six years ago by Mrs. Millner, who started an Industrial Association with the view of helping some of the workers in the town to gain

a living by the systematic sale of their embroidery. The industry has gradually grown, until it is now one of the lesser trades of the town of Mountmellick, and gives employment to more than fifty embroideresses. The main advantage of the work is its extreme durability: the material upon which the original Mountmellick embroidery was executed was a stout make of white satin jean, white knitting-cotton of various sizes being used to form the stitches. The designs are usually somewhat naturalistic in style, but are treated in a purely conventional fashion, this being in great measure compulsory, in consequence of the whole work being executed with white cotton only. Certain flowers and fruits, such as the passion-flower, blackberries, oak leaves, acorns, ferns, and wheat occur with such frequency as to be almost traditional. The stitches are welcome additions to the repertoire of any worker. Many were copied from ancient German linen embroidery; the rest are variations of the well-known stitches employed in other and the ordinary kinds of fancy work.

Although new embroideries are constantly being brought into notice, few are worthy to take any permanent place amongst women's work. One of the exceptions is the drawn-thread work that has

been revived during the last two or three years. When this is well and conscientiously executed it will bear comparatively hard wear; the materials required are easily obtained and not very expensive, consisting merely of good linen and flax threads, while the stitches may be as elaborate or as simple as desired. In the easier forms of the work, button-holing and "drawn-thread work knots" are the principal stitches employed to form the unravelled threads into bars, and to catch them together, to prevent them from fraying further, after certain others of the threads have been drawn away. In the more elaborate patterns, lace stitches and many kinds of button-holing are used, which form patterns varying according to the way in which they are grouped. There is literally no limit to the variety and beauty of such stitches, and some of the more dainty and fanciful kinds of drawn-thread work vie with lace itself in delicacy. The most beautiful specimens are executed with pure white thread; though good work is occasionally done with colours, it is not in such good taste, and is not so durable as the white. If modern workers can scarcely hope, owing to the altered circumstances of the day, to rival the drawn-thread lace made in India and

Persia, which is so fine as to require a magnifying glass for its due appreciation, there is still a vast field open for their talents in the execution of good and elaborate work of the kind. Much interest has been taken in the revival of artistic needlework by our Princesses. Princess Christian takes an active share in the management of the Royal School of Art Needlework, and the Marchioness of Lorne prepares many of the designs executed by the members of The Ladies' Work Society in Sloane Street.

Many ladies have of late encouraged the art of embroidery amongst those of their tenants who have suffered acutely from the general agricultural depression; and Irish workers, in particular, show themselves remarkably expert in the execution of fine white embroideries and drawn-thread work. The eyesight required must be extremely strong to withstand the strain of such fine stitchery, and it can scarcely be expected that the returns will be commensurate with the amount of labour and time needed for the best work. Appreciative customers are few and far between; and the constant improvements and developments that take place in the machinery employed for the production of imitation embroidery, as I may call it, are

likely to slowly, but surely, kill the demand for the real, hand-made articles. Too many people, alas, do not know or care to know the difference between the genuine and the machine-made work, and think only of the advantage they gain, from a pecuniary point of view, by taking the cheaper make. The number of non-professional workers, too, is becoming smaller now that so many women are turning their attention to men's pursuits and recreations in preference to those which form part of their own special sphere. Unless an unforeseen reaction sets in, the time will surely come when skilful amateur embroideresses will be found only amongst invalids and others who, from various causes, are prevented from taking any very active share in the business of life. When women shall have forced their way into all the masculine professions, then will be the time for the men to take up their neglected needles ; and rather than that the noble art of embroidery become altogether lost and decayed, let us say, with *The Spectator*, "the sooner these fine gentlemen are set to work the better."

CHAPTER IV.

MODERN CHURCH NEEDLEWORK.

"And, ye lovely ladies,
With your long fyngres,
That ye have silk and sandal
To sowe, whan tyme is
Chesibles for chapeleyns,
Chirches to honure."

Piers the Plowman.

WITH the general awakening that has taken place in ecclesiastical matters during the last thirty years, Church needlework has received its due share of attention; and it is but fair to our workers to say, that as far as the actual execution of the stitches goes, the embroidery they now produce is quite equal to any that dates from the time when the art was at its highest state of perfection.

As in so many other matters, it is in the design that is to be found the weakest point in modern Church work. This is too often apt to be poor, or to rush to the other extreme and be over-

crowded. The almost complete neglect of symbolism in other styles of embroidery has not extended to Church needlework; but too often the introduction of emblems is managed clumsily, instead of forming a necessary part of the design itself, as is so often the case in the older work. This disconnection between the various details is more particularly noticeable in the orphreys and superfrontals of our altar-cloths, where a mere row of crosses, triangles, or some such insignia constantly forms the sole decoration. With the exercise of a little more care and trouble it is possible to introduce these as portions of a better balanced arrangement of scrolls and medallions, thus avoiding the objectionable scrappy appearance. Church embroidery should teem with symbolism in all its details, no design ever having its place upon the work without its due significance for the worshipper, who is rarely dull to the appreciation of such metaphor when this is well and adequately expressed. It is one of Pugin's maxims that "ornament, in the true and proper meaning of the word, signifies the embellishment of that which is in itself useful, in an appropriate manner." Yet, by a perversion of the term, it is frequently applied to mere enrichment which deserves no

other name than unmeaning detail, dictated by no other rule but that of individual caprice. Every ornament, to deserve the name, must possess an appropriate meaning, and be introduced with an intelligent purpose and on reasonable grounds. The symbolical association of each ornament must be understood and considered; otherwise things beautiful in themselves will be rendered absurd by their application.

The history of these symbols is by no means a point of minor interest to the student of ecclesiastical art. She will learn how the cross itself is one of the most ancient of the emblems employed, though its earliest form was represented by two fire sticks, and bore reference to the worship of the sun. How in later times this very sign was supposed to be the mark of blood made upon the doors of the Israelitish houses, to spare them from sharing in the murder of the first-born; and how yet a third form owed its origin to a fourfold repetition of the Greek letter *gamma*, in which shape it has been found in Indian, Egyptian, Japanese, Celtic, and Scandinavian art, and can be traced, under the name of the Gammadion, from the earliest ages down to our own times.

After making such a point of the necessity for

the observance of correct symbolism in Church needlework, I feel bound to give a few examples of the signs and emblems that have been employed from the earliest times. Many of these, such as the lamb, the dove, and the symbols of the apostles, are known to every one. Floral emblems are few, and easily remembered. Christ is represented by the Church rose, which is similar to that used in heraldry, and very similar to the Tudor rose; the Virgin by the white lily, which is often taken, also, as an emblem of purity. Humility is portrayed by the lily of the valley; strength by the oak; victory by palm branches; peace by the olive; the sacrament by grapes, vine-leaves, wheat-ears; the apple points to the fall of man; the pomegranate to such attributes as power, dominion, and glory. The significance of the passion-flower and its many details is familiar to most people. When the figure of Christ is represented clothed in white it is His innocence, and when in red it is His martyrdom, that is to be uppermost in the minds of the beholders.

Even the jewels represented on the dresses of angels have a meaning. Sapphires imply celestial contemplation; emeralds, eternal youth; crystals, purity; rubies, divine love. When the angels

carry swords, trumpets, or sceptres it is to be remembered that they are ministers of the wrath, voice, and might of God respectively ; crowns imply eternal life ; scrolls the word of God revealed to all ; musical instruments, heavenly praise and rejoicing. Many are the emblems of the Trinity—the triangle and the shamrock, or trefoil, being those most often seen. Animals are frequently pressed into the service. A lion represents St. Mark; an ox, St. Luke ; an eagle, St. John ; the pelican serves as an emblem of Christ's sacrifice for men ; the peacock of the all-seeing God. A fish is an ancient symbol of chastity ; a lion, of the tribe of Judah, or of regal power. Wheels, globes, stars, hexagons, all have their separate tale to tell to those ready and willing to hear. The blue, scarlet, and purple so often mentioned in the Old Testament, in connection with ecclesiastical embroideries, were not without their symbolism—the blue recalling the air and sky ; the purple the sea ; the scarlet, fire ; the earth being typified by the flax used as a background for the stitchery.

There is less demand for originality and novelty of design in Church work than in secular embroidery, as there are no new facts or principles to be taught in ecclesiastical art. At the same time, though it

is a duty to copy all that is worth copying in the old productions, much of the conventional drawing may, with advantage, be remodelled, and rendered more in accordance with the views of the present day, there being much that is too grotesque to admit of exact repetition. As Mr. Selwyn Image says: "The study of old work is of the highest importance, is essential—the patient and humble study of it. But for what end? To learn principles and methods, to secure a sound foundation for oneself; not to slavishly imitate results and live on, bound hand and foot in the swaddling clothes of precedent."

Another of the errors into which some of our most conscientious designers fall is that of choosing a pattern which is far too intricate to be effective in the place it is destined to ornament. This is specially the case with modern altar-cloths. It is just and right that the workmanship should be of the very best for such a purpose; but the centre motive, especially, should be so bold in its principal lines and curves that it can be clearly seen and appreciated from all parts of the Church. In the hurry and drive of the present day it is not surprising that little leisure should be left for the production of substantially good work, the rage for cheapness being also an effectual blight. In this

age of shams, unfortunately, Church needlework has not escaped; and machine-made appliqués too often take the place of what should be essentially the best work of the embroideress herself, executed with the true spirit of devotion and painstaking and conscientious zeal. To all this is raised, not without much truth to support it, the objection of the great expense involved. Certainly, to do good work that will stand constant exposure to light and air the richest materials are required; and that these cost a small fortune is not to be gainsaid. The remedy is easily found. Let the rich workers —and there are plenty who are both ready and willing to spend their wealth thus—undertake the purchase and embroidery of the altar-cloths, hangings, and such larger articles; and let those whose purses are not so ample as their devotion content themselves with the preparation of the smaller of the necessaries for the Church services. These are numerous enough, and lend themselves to the exercise of deftness of workmanship quite as well as do the larger and more expensive things to which the ambition of most workers leads. For examples, there are the pulpit and lectern hangings, footstools and kneelers, bookmarkers and alms-bags. Then again, those workers whose ability for manipulating

delicate silk and gold threads is limited, will find plenty to occupy them in the preparation of the white napery, chalice veil, paten covers, etc., used in the Communion Service. Less experienced workers still will find the embroidery of the curtains to be used in various parts of the Church quite within their powers. I recently saw some very effective curtains made of tapestry, woven in a bold, ecclesiastical pattern; the main portions of the design were followed with stitches worked with coarse wools, and were otherwise emphasised by shadings and markings of the same. At a distance the needlework served to throw the brocaded pattern into higher relief, and the effect was far from displeasing, though obtained by such simple means.

The orthodox Church needlework is executed in a totally different manner from secular embroidery. Instead of the design being traced and worked directly upon the material that is to serve as a foundation for it, the various sections are drawn separately upon a special make of linen, which is mounted in a frame. These sections are then worked in the manner decided upon, every scrap of the pattern being hidden by stitches, so that no vestige of the holland is visible between them, and

they are finally applied to the velvet, brocade, or damask chosen as a background, the point of juncture being hidden by a line of fine gold cord, or something similar. To obviate any hardness of appearance that would be obtained were these designs to be thus left upon the richer material, scrolls and sprays of various curves and forms, to suit the outlines of the design and the available space, are put in, with a double line of gold thread as a finishing touch. It is with such scrolls that spangles are generally used, these being sewn on at some distance apart on either side of the gold thread. It is very important that all the metal used in Church needlework should be of the very best; and unless the worker can afford to purchase spangles of good quality, she will do better to leave them out altogether, using in their stead small bosses worked with silk over a padding. It stands to reason that, exposed in a large space like a church, under all conditions of atmosphere, the tinsel on the embroideries is more likely to become tarnished than that employed on needlework in ordinary domestic use.

In the case of a large piece of work such as an altar-cloth, the mounting of all the many sections required for the proper execution of the design is

more than a mere amateur can manage. This is due partly to the difficulty of housing so large a frame as is required for the whole expanse of the cloth, partly to the extreme accuracy that is needed in placing these small details each and all in their right places upon it. It is far more satisfactory for an amateur to send the embroidery to a professional firm to make up; as their workers, being thoroughly used to the business, have the power of rectifying any small imperfections there may be in the amateur's work, which, under her hands, would probably be more conspicuous when mounted than when still in the frame.

Nobody intending to undertake a good piece of Church work should start it until she has laid her plans very fully, and made herself thoroughly acquainted with all the parts to be most considered; and, as many clergymen are extremely particular in such matters, the vicar or rector of the church for which the work is destined should be consulted before the materials are bought and the embroidery begun.

A very common mistake made by an amateur lies in the choice of a design that is not in the slightest degree in accordance with the style of the church. An architect will best be able to advise her on this

point, and will also save her from choosing a design that is earlier in date and style than that of the church itself; this being obviously in as bad taste as would be the upholstering of a fine old Chippendale chair with embroidery that owes its origin to the sixteenth century. The idea presented to those who know anything of such subjects would be, that the church or the chair was built or made to suit the embroidered decorations, rather than that these were made to embellish the other. Another pitfall is the choice of designs that are not appropriate to Church needlework at all; the symbolism they embrace, if any, being traceable rather to pagan rites than to those of the Christian ritual.

Another and very important question that will arise is that of the colour to be employed. The most usual scheme of colouring is as follows: red for martyrs, Ash Wednesday, some days in Holy Week, and at Whitsuntide; green for ordinary Sundays; white for festivals, such as Easter and certain saints' days; violet for Advent; and, in some cases, black for Good Friday. This arrangement is subject to variation, some clergymen abjuring green altogether, and using red draperies in its place. It must be borne in mind, too, that Church colours are less varied as to shades

than those employed in ordinary embroidery; the violet, for instance, is a deep rich colour, with more blue than red in its composition; the red is bright, inclining to scarlet; such tints as those to which fashion has given the distinction of cardinal, grenat, etc., should be avoided. The blue is pure and rich; the green rather vivid, approaching to grass green. No notion of æstheticism should be allowed to influence the worker in her selection of shades; but she must remember that, seen, as they usually are, within a comparatively vast space, the sombre effect given by degraded tints would be by no means desirable. In the same way, in the embroidery no attention is paid to the natural colours of flowers and leaves, though this rule is subject to variation. These are treated quite conventionally, and are rarely elaborately shaded, but this of course depends upon the style in which they are designed.

A matter in which an amateur generally finds no small difficulty is in marking the pattern upon the material upon which she is to work. There is no special trouble as regards the various sections that are to be worked upon the holland, as, if the outlines are drawn first upon paper, they can easily be transferred with the help of transferring linen. It is, however, necessary to have a complete outline

of the design, with its fine sprays and scrolls, marked upon the velvet, in order to ensure every detail being fixed in its right place when the mounting is to be undertaken. Of course upon a material with a pile surface, such as velvet, it is impossible to mark the pattern by any means that necessitate the use of pressure. For this reason, if the worker does not feel disposed to call in professional aid, she must learn to pounce the pattern neatly and correctly. The length of velvet must first be stretched out firmly over a smooth wooden table; better still over a sheet of glass; and best of all over a marble pastry board. The design itself must be accurately drawn upon a sheet of paper; this should be placed over three or four folds of blanket, or something equally thick, and holes pricked in all the outlines with a large pin or needle—a bonnet pin answers well. In the more intricate parts of the pattern these holes must be placed as close as can be without running them together. In straight lines they may be further apart. When all the design has thus been followed, the pricked paper is laid in its proper position on the velvet, and held down at the edges with heavy weights. If an old table is used, it is a good plan to fasten the velvet and the design temporarily to it.

with small nails put along the edges. Now the pounce must be prepared. This is composed of various materials according to the colour of the velvet. Powdered pipe-clay, charcoal, or blue mixed with the pipe-clay, white chalk, and, in fact, almost any sufficiently fine powder will answer the purpose. It has to be tied up in a small piece of net, which is rubbed over the design till all the holes appear to be filled up with powder. Another plan is to sprinkle the powder over the paper, and to rub it into the holes with a little tool made of wash-leather, and resembling a miniature drum-stick. In any case the rubbing must be in one direction only, say from left to right, beginning at the top, and working downwards. When the whole of the pattern is thus followed, the worker must raise the paper carefully, so that none of the powder falls on the velvet, and, if the pouncing has been rightly managed, the whole of the design should be found marked in dots upon the material.

Even now the pattern is not ready for working, as the dots in their present state would soon rub off the velvet, and the design be lost. The pattern must therefore be worked over with a paint-brush full of Chinese white, the dots being run together to form a thin white outline. The white ink that

was fashionable for writing notes some year or two ago serves specially well for this purpose, and, as it can be used with a pen, the lines can be made more neatly than with a brush. The amateur will now see what a tedious part of the work she spares herself when she sends her velvet to a shop to have the design marked upon it ; I fear there are few workers who nowadays are so thoroughly interested in their task as to have an ambition to manage it entirely themselves. In spite of all the mechanical contrivances that have been introduced for transferring patterns, there is nothing better than this somewhat lengthy operation where velvet and other delicate materials are concerned.

In placing the various portions of the work together, a line of fine black purse twist is often carried round them, partly with the object of distinctly marking them off from other portions of the pattern, partly with that of raising them into slight relief upon the background. It is rarely that two different colours are allowed to rest next to one another without this dividing line, and it is not unfrequently accompanied by a line of gold thread about the same thickness.

The execution of figures requires a special aptitude, and it is only after some years of training

that even a professional worker is able to execute figures and faces in a fairly satisfactory manner. This will give some idea of the amount of skilled labour exhibited in such an altar-cloth as that on opposite page, which was worked in the ateliers of the Maison Helbronner. The foundation of the cloth was of rich white damask, the design being suggested by the lesson for All Saints' Day. The robes of the figures were embroidered in white, carefully shaded; each nimbus was worked with pure gold thread, the palms in shades of olive green. The medallions on the super-frontal were worked richly with gold raised in high relief, the pomegranates being in their natural colours. The fringe was chosen of white and gold, with real crystals sprinkled upon the border at regular intervals.

One characteristic of Church needlework which causes the execution to differ from that required for ordinary embroidery is the lavish use of gold thread. The manner in which this is applied has much to do with the beauty of the work. Many of the sections of a design are not infrequently entirely filled with these threads, which are laid close together, sometimes in curved, at other times in straight lines upon the material, and

ALTAR CLOTH DESIGNED AND WORKED AT THE MAISON HELBRONNER.

sewn down with stitches of coloured silk. These stitches themselves are in good work arranged to form patterns of vandykes, battlements, waves, chevrons, diapers of various sorts, triangles, and others upon the gold. Sometimes the gold is allowed to set quite flat upon the surface of the material; at others it is raised in higher or lower relief over a padding of soft cotton or twine. No better model for the use of gold could be found than that afforded by the pall of The Fishmongers' Company, figured on page 39. Purse twist is not unfrequently used in the same manner as the gold thread; the securing stitches being, of course, of a different colour from that of the twist itself.

While recommending the use of good gold thread, and plenty of it, the amateur must understand that I do not advocate the plan followed by some workers of so loading the material with tinsel that it has all the appearance of having once served as a state livery. Gold thread always shows to better advantage when employed with silks of various colours than when it is used to their exclusion. Many attempts have been made to introduce silver in its place, and the effect, especially on white draperies, is exceedingly good; but as yet, unfortunately, no silver threads have been invented that do not

tarnish after they have been in use for some months.

The actual stitches employed for church work are by no means so varied as most people imagine ; the effect being gained rather by the arrangement and position of the stitches than by their intricacy. The general term " couching " is applied to such as hold down gold thread or purse silk in the manner above described. Long and short stitch is used for leaves, and wherever a shaded effect is desired. It works out specially well with floss silk, as the untwisted nature of the threads produces a smooth surface, which has almost the appearance of a piece of woven material laid upon the work. Satin stitch comes into use for such details as can hardly be reckoned as leaves, though they are too broad to be considered as sprays. It serves for working bosses and the smaller spots which are not unfrequently used instead of spangles. It is also largely used for embroidery on the church linen. Split stitch is invaluable for faces, hands, feet, and similar details requiring very delicate treatment. Chain stitch, though occasionally worked with silk, generally figures as outline embroidery on chalice veils, paten covers, and cloths for the Communion Table. Ordinary crewel work, and the stitches connected

with it, are employed on cloth or serge for kneelers and curtains, but never appear on the more important items of the church furniture. Carpets are worked, as a rule, upon canvas, the stitches being such as are used for Berlin woolwork.

The smaller emblems, such as the crosses, monograms, crowns, and similar devices found on the ends of stoles, book-markers, and on alms-bags and purses are managed in a style of their own. At most of the shops where materials for church needlework are sold, these designs can be obtained cut out of yellow cloth, stiffened at the back with net. They take the place of, and are an improvement upon, the cardboard shapes used in the early days of the revival of the art. These cloth shapes are pasted to the material upon which they are required, then covered with lines of gold thread or of twist. This is laid across and across the cloth, not taken through to the wrong side, and is caught down with a stitch at each edge. The work requires more care than appears at first sight, as anything but a pleasing effect is obtained should any irregularity be suffered to remain in the set of the lines over the cloth. The edges are outlined with one or more lines of fine gold cord or twist, and any additional ornament in the way of scrolls or sprays

is added to break up the severity of the work. These designs are frequently raised somewhat into relief by the addition of padding cotton laid over the cloth, and arranged so as to stand up higher in the centre of the device than at the edges. When the worker buys the cloth designs she will find there are several small pieces of cloth which will require to be cut away when pasted to the material. These are technically known as "stays," their use being to prevent certain portions of the cloth shape from falling away from the rest. They are found only in the more intricate patterns, as in certain monograms and combinations of a cross and a circle, or an arrangement of triangles. It is a common thing for inexperienced workers to cover these stays with stitches, under the impression that they form part of the pattern itself.

No inconsiderable item in the expense of church needlework is formed by the fringes employed for the edge of super-frontals, pulpit, and lectern, as they are almost invariably made of the richest silk, matching the embroidery in colour. Occasionally, in higher class work, gold bullion fringes are employed, and are often combined with crystal and jewelled drops and hangers.

Before leaving this subject I must once again

remind my readers of the necessity for devoting their utmost care and attention to the preparation of any work intended for use in the church. It is far better not to attempt anything at all in this way than to execute it in a slovenly, half-hearted manner. Many women undertake church needlework as a Lenten penance, without pausing to consider whether their offering will be as acceptable when made in this spirit as if it had been the outcome of a feeling of religious devotion.

CHAPTER V.

EMBROIDERY IN PICTURES.

"Here, in her hair,
The painter plays the spider; and hath woven
A golden mesh t'entrap the hearts of men,
Faster than gnats in cobwebs."

Merchant of Venice, Act III., sc. ii.

"The old definition of beauty in the Roman school of painting was, *il piu nell' uno*—multitude in unity; and there is no doubt that such is the principle of beauty."

COLERIDGE, *Table Talk*.

AS children, we have all been taught by that good old-fashioned tale of "Eyes and No Eyes" how very interesting and instructive a country walk may become under the guidance of a quick and close observation and ready intelligence; and we have been shown how very dull the same walk may be when no senses or powers are called into play, beyond such as are required for the mere purposes of locomotion. A similar story, with an equally good moral, might well be

written concerning an exhibition of pictures instead of a walk out into the country; and Charles Kingsley has left us, in his word-painting of Bellini's "Doge," a noteworthy example of how much profit and pleasure may be gained from the intelligent study of even a single picture, and that a very simple one. If, instead of strolling in an aimless way through the rooms of our National Gallery, for instance, pausing only here and there as any special picture arrests attention by its brilliant colouring or dramatic composition, a visitor were to take one special subject, and follow that up closely, infinitely more pleasure would be obtained and more lasting results secured.

Take jewellery, for instance, and notice the endless diversity, not only in the trinkets themselves there portrayed, but in the manner in which they are worn. Compare the designs of these, also, with the ugly and childish patterns which find favour with the public nowadays, amongst which whips, spurs, mice, cocks, and skulls contend for popularity with chicks and broken egg-shells, prawns, and dogs' and horses' heads. Or study the pottery. The vessels of precious ointment seen in representations of the Magdalene alone merit particular notice, so varied are they in form and design.

Books and book-covers, too, offer a wide field for observation and imitation; while if dress be the all-absorbing object of interest, it would be well to note the infinite variety in the style and make of sleeves or head-dresses. As to textile fabrics, such as brocade, velvet, satin, damask, cloth of gold and silver, and many others, a volume might be written concerning the history of their designs and colouring.

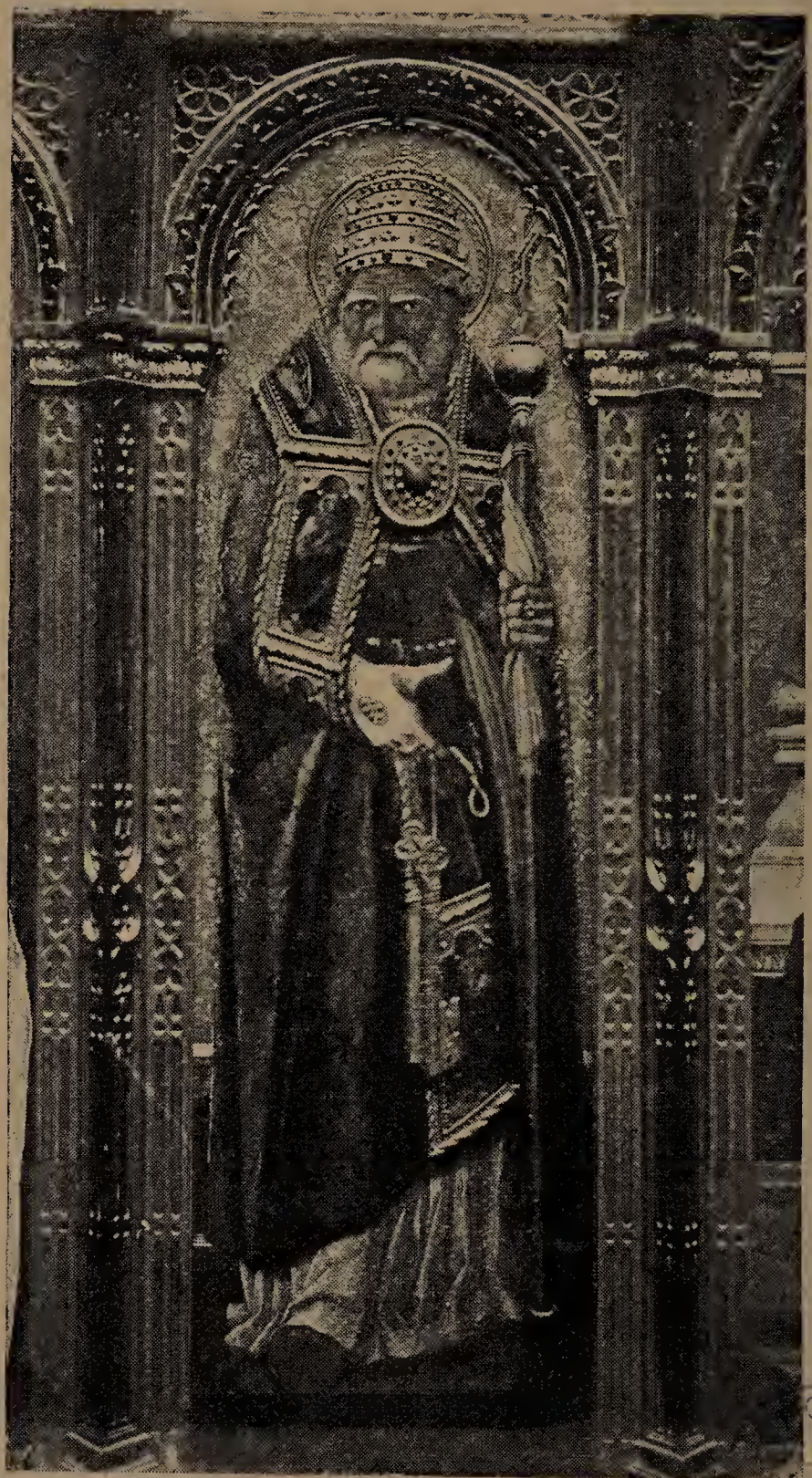
For pictures comprising embroidery amongst their details, it is of little use to turn to such as are of either the earliest or latest date; and in all cases it will be found that those of sacred subjects are the richest in minutiæ of this kind. In the Middle Ages, and especially in such a country as Italy, the best of everything was set aside for the services and ceremonials of the Church; and this fact is proved by the existence of the many splendid pieces of embroidery that have been handed down to us from those times. There seems little doubt, however, that the gorgeous ecclesiastical robes shown in these pictures were seldom painted from the actual vestments themselves; though so thorough a knowledge of the designs required was possessed by the artists, that it is an extremely rare thing to find any impossibility or anachronism in the arrangement of the patterns.

An exception to this rule may be noticed in the figure of St. Zenobius in Gozzoli's "Virgin Enthroned" (No. 283). Here the familiar pomegranate pattern on the cope of green and gold brocade strikes one as being more regularly disposed than it would really appear on any fabric falling in such heavy folds. In this same picture are many embroidered details; the head-covering of the Virgin is delicately worked in gold, and the apparels on the alb worn by St. Zenobius amply repay minute examination. The cope worn by this saint may be taken as an example of the favourite style of ornamentation for these vestments in mediæval times, the orphreys being very frequently thus divided into compartments, which are filled in with figures of saints, or, as in this case, with scenes from the life of Christ. Several antique copes ornamented in this manner may be studied in the South Kensington Museum; and in the pictures similar orphreys are worn by St. Nicholas in Benvenuto da Siena's "Madonna and Child" (No. 909), by St. Ambrose (264), by the bishops in the "Exhumation of St. Hubert" (783), by St. Augustine in San Severino's "Marriage of St. Catherine" (249), and many others. The chausble worn by St. John in the picture by Landini or

Casentino (580) is embroidered in much the same way as are these orphreys, but, being earlier as to date, is consequently simpler in style. The busts only of various saints are placed in a series of quatrefoils, traced out with fine scroll work.

The figure of St. Peter attired in pontifical robes (p. 108) is taken from a large altar-piece by Carlo Crivelli (788); and here, as again in David's "Canon and Patron Saints" (1045), may be noticed the same general design of the cope. That worn by St. Peter is of red and gold brocade; the orphreys are divided by heavy gold cord into compartments, in each of which, under a triple canopy, is embroidered the figure of a saint. St. Paul and St. James may be recognised by the sword and spear which they respectively carry; the folds of the robe prevent others from being distinguished, the flaying knife in his hand being all that is visible of St. Bartholomew. The lining of the cope is of a dull shade of green.

The vestment worn by St. Martin in David's picture is of a rich crimson velvet; but there is a symmetry and a regularity about these orphreys which inclines me to think that they were intended to be considered as made of woven, not embroidered, material. That this may well be we have abundant



ST. PETER, FROM AN ALTAR-PIECE BY CRIVELLI.

proof, as such "orphrey webs" were much in use in the fifteenth century, those made at Cologne being especially prized, although rivalled, if not surpassed in beauty, by those of Venetian and Florentine manufacture.

It is to be regretted that in scarcely any of these paintings is the hood of the cope sufficiently visible to enable us to fully appreciate the delicate and minute workmanship that was usually expended upon it. Portions of the hood are shown in the gold and green brocade cope worn by St. Simeon in No. 706, in which the hood appears to be closely embroidered with figures; and in that worn also by St. Simeon in Marco Marziale's "Circumcision" (803). Upon the hood of St. Martin's cope, in No. 1045, is just visible a curious ornament of metal, which is brought down the centre of the hood, and the object of which seems very uncertain. It may possibly have been added to give weight to the hood, and so prevent it from slipping out of place; or it may have simply been intended to enrich still further the appearance of the vestment. The technical name for this ornament was the Italian word *spilla*, meaning a pin; and in a very fine panel of tapestry that has been recently added to the needlework treasures in the South

Kensington Museum, one of a group of angels adoring the Infant Saviour is arrayed in a cope, the hood of which is similarly decorated.

Returning now to the picture of St. Peter, we must notice, amongst other accessories of his costume, the bands crossed over his breast beneath the cope,—which are red, embroidered with gold in a series of foliated crosses,—and the red episcopal shoes worked with a cross in gold. Red shoes or sandals were considered as devoted in this country solely to the use of the clergy; but that this rule did not hold good in Italy may be gathered from the fact that the Madonna, in several pictures, is represented as wearing similar shoes, but without the sacred emblem. The very name of "sandals," as used for shoes of this kind, points to their usual red colour. The gloves also must be noted, ornamented as they are on the back of the hand with a metal plate studded with jewels.

I must here remind my readers, in passing, that this picture may be taken as a type of the ecclesiastical full dress of the age, and is correct even to the minutest details, such as the jewels upon the mitre and gloves. These, in the Middle Ages at least, were rarely cut or polished like those for secular use; but were generally, as in this figure, set *en*

cabochon or in their natural form, under the idea that they were deeper in colour and richer in effect, and so more suited for wear at religious ceremonials. The same may be observed in the various pictures in the Gallery, in which the rings are worn on the fingers outside the gloves. An interesting word-history, too, is included in that plate of metal studded with jewels which so often ornaments gloves and bookcovers. This was originally known under the name of "tassellus"; and it would be curious to trace the changes it has undergone in its meaning, from that of a flat and immovable metal disc to the loosely hanging ornament which we now know as a "tassel."

The gloves, apparently of white silk, worn by St. Nicholas (909) show more plainly the shape of the ecclesiastical gloves of the time. The delicate red stitchery round the cuffs and round the base of the thumb should be admired; and it will be noticed that the point of the cuff is finished with a tiny metal ball, according to the fashion of that day. Similar gloves were worn by the late Cardinal Manning as he lay in state before the funeral.

A familiar object in all representations of ecclesiastical dignitaries, on brasses and other memorials of the Middle Ages, is the long strip of linen which

is laid round the crosier or pastoral staff when this is held in the hand. The object of this cover may have been threefold: to prevent the hand from smelling unpleasantly from contact with the metal; to insure a firm hold of the smooth and slippery staff; or to prevent the warmth of the hand from tarnishing the metal, or itself becoming stained by long contact with it. However this may be, it is a fact that, though common enough in pictures, illuminations, and brasses, these covers themselves are extremely rare at the present day. Two are to be seen in the textile court of the South Kensington Museum, both of German origin, and closely worked with coloured silks in sampler fashion. It is said that in English memorials of the same date the pointed top, which is like the head of a tassel, is rarely, if ever, seen. The cover is in full view in the figure of St. Donatian in David's picture; in that of St. Peter, although the cap is hidden by the staff itself, the linen is delicately painted, and we can see that it was fringed at the ends, and finely worked with gold. A specially beautiful crosier cover, worked in gold, and having a top of delicate network and a fringe of gold, is to be admired in the "Count of Henegau and Patron Saint" (264); a picture full of attractive details of embroideries

and jewels. The mitre in the foreground must not be overlooked, with its fine needlework, and the representation of the Crucifixion, which occupies the most prominent position in the front. Very elaborate mitres of the traditional white colour are also to be found in Orcagna's "Coronation of the Virgin" (569); in Crivelli's "Annunciation" (739), and in the "Exhumation of St. Hubert" (783); in the latter one of cream-coloured damask, ornamented with bands of gold, should be specially noticed.

A half-length figure of St. Stephen is shown on the same altar-piece as is that of St. Peter on page 108. The embroidery on the dull red robe of the martyr is exceedingly delicate in design and workmanship, and the colours are so charmingly mingled as to be well worth noting for reproduction in a piece of modern embroidery. The background, of soft greenish blue, richly worked over with leafy scrolls in gold, springing from a bolder central device, is bordered with gold cord. The breast-piece is partially concealed by the large gold tassels which hang over it.

As a veritable encyclopædia of designs of all kinds, there is no picture in the Gallery that can equal Marziale's "Circumcision" (803), which, al-

though taking no rank from an artistic point of view, is noteworthy on account of the innumerable patterns and designs to be found in it. The artist has confined himself by no means to patterns furnished either by one particular country or any special period; but has made use of Byzantine, Celtic, Lombardic, Italian, and Oriental designs, with consideration only for the purpose they had to serve in embellishing the costumes and architecture included in his picture. The corporal or lectern cover is a conspicuous object in the foreground of the painting, and appears to be rather German in character than Italian. It is made of loosely woven linen, apparently very similar in texture to that used at the present day for the same sort of embroidery. In places, some of the threads have been drawn out, so as to lighten the appearance of the cloth by the introduction of star-shaped openwork spaces. The design of branching sprays, alternating with quaint birds, and worked in cross-stitch in subdued shades of red, blue, and yellow, is so accurately painted that a worker would find no difficulty whatever in copying the pattern, as it stands, upon a modern piece of cross-stitch linen.

The same remark applies to all the patterns given in this noteworthy picture. A particularly graceful

border is that on the robe of the wife of the donor of the picture, who is standing at the left-hand side of the canvas, and who is attired in a robe of blue, finished with a band of the same colour worked in gold. On the dress of a child kneeling in the foreground is another equally effective, and, I may say, practical, border, worked in black upon a grey foundation, but of quite another date and character to that before noted. The orphreys of the cope worn by Simeon are entirely different in style to any before described. Very little of them is shown, but we can see enough to find out that they are worked in a scroll-pattern in yellow, with touches of blue to accord with the colours of the main part of the vestment. The favourite pine-apple, or pomegranate, pattern of those days occurs on brocades twice in this picture; and the way in which the folds of the robes are displayed is well worthy of notice. There is a piece of velvet preserved at South Kensington which is almost the same in colour and pattern as that of which the robe of the patron is made. He stands at the right-hand side of the little group. The cushion upon which the child is placed is of dull blue material, bordered with a brownish band, upon which is worked, in gold, an interwoven or knotted pattern, which is unmistak-

ably Celtic or Scandinavian in character. This, too, offers a suggestion to the embroideress, as a narrow design in black is worked on the blue cover of the cushion beyond each edge of the gold-embroidered band, thus breaking the hard lines, and leading the eye gradually on to the plain expanse of greyish blue beyond it. Other cushions elaborately embroidered are to be found in "The Annunciation," by Crivelli (739).

Few better examples of ornamental needlework applied to pillows can be studied than that on page 117, where the bambino is resting his head upon a cushion, worked round the edge with a particularly good pattern of flowing scrolls, in which acorns play a prominent part. As these acorns appear again on the embroidered blanket in which the little prince is wrapped, and on the coverlet, one may safely imagine that they formed the badge of the noble house to which he belonged. The cushion might well serve as an example for the modern embroideress, who has but one idea, that of placing the ornament upon the flat sides, where it is not only uncomfortable, but is hidden when the pillow is in use. On the other hand, we have certainly the advantage in the softer and more yielding feathers with which our pillows are filled,

and our babies are not rolled up so tightly as this poor little prince. The richest embroidery, in an "all-over" design, also appears on the coverlet, which is bordered with a tiny edging, probably of gold lace. This picture is in the Pitti Gallery at

THE BABY PRINCE, IN THE PITTI GALLERY.

Florence, and was painted by Federigo Baroccio at the end of the sixteenth or beginning of the seventeenth century.

Space does not permit me, tempting though the subject be, to call attention to the many beautiful borders which adorn the hems of robes, edges of

veils, and the like, in our National Gallery; but note should be taken of that striking, but, unfortunately, unfinished picture, "The Nativity," by Francesca (908). The colouring of the dresses worn by the choir of angels in this is particularly beautiful; and the charm is greatly enhanced by the bands of embroidery mixed with jewels with which they are bordered. The costume of the Virgin herself is perfect as a piece of colouring. She wears the traditional blue mantle, lined with grey, and trimmed with an embroidery of pearls and gold, over an under-dress of rich dark crimson.

In "The Exhumation of St. Hubert," before alluded to, the embroidery on certain of the stoles worn by the clergy should not be passed over, as they are worked in one of the most ancient of designs,—that known as the "fylfote," "gammadion," or "swastika." This particular form of cross has been traced back to the rites of the Persians in the worship of the sun, but is equally common in the arts of Egypt and Arabia.

Turning now to pictures of secular subjects, we find but few instances in the National Gallery of embroidery used for any purpose except that of the ornamentation of dress; but the fair Venetian and other Italian ladies seem to have spared no pains to

render their gala costumes as brilliant as possible by the use of brocades, embroidery, quilting, and jewellery. There are several coifs in particular that are worthy of remark ; one of the most elaborate adorns the head of Isotta, the fourth wife of Sigismondo Malatesta. This lady, as may be judged from her physiognomy, was one of the advanced women of her age, and proved herself worthy of taking a prominent part in public affairs by governing the province of Rimini with discretion and firmness during a time when her husband was absent. The foundation of the caul she is wearing in the portrait (see Frontispiece) was apparently of silk, closely covered with an embroidery in gold thread, studded with pearls and turquoises ; while the square veil, which is arranged cornerwise on the head, is finished with small drops of pearls. This, to judge by its bluish-white tint, was probably of silk. To our taste, this elegantly dressed lady, in her gown of rich red and gold brocade, her elaborate coif and graceful veil, would be somewhat improved in appearance were she to adopt one of our fashions, and allow her hair to grow lower down upon her forehead. So does fashion change, however, that a few more years may see our belles adopting this freak of shaving the tops of their

heads, and they will then probably think it beautiful in proportion as it is popular.

The portrait of a Venetian beauty, by Bissolo (631), must be noted, on account of her dress of rich red brocaded material, trimmed round the square, open neck with a band of embroidery, worked in a series of medallions, filled in with strange animals running at full speed. A curious design this, truly, for a lady's dress; but similar patterns are frequently found on Sicilian and Venetian fabrics of the same age as this picture.

Jeanne d'Archel, in her portrait by Nicholas Lucidel (184), is attired in a dress of red, the bodice of which is richly worked in gold and silver threads in a design so accurately painted that it would be a real pleasure to copy it in stitches on satin. A cuff of white cambric appears on the sleeves of an Italian lady whose portrait was painted by Moroni (1023), which bears a strong resemblance to many of the frillings still used as trimmings. The embroidery is executed with red, and the edges are button-holed round and cut into scallops. Similar frills are worn by a child in a picture by Carucci (649).

There are remarkably few paintings of lace among the pictures in this Gallery, though they

abound in other collections. In Carlo Dolci's "Virgin and Child" (934) is a very minutely painted cloth of lacis work, or darned netting, of which many specimens have come down to us from the time when the work must have been extremely popular in Italy. The portrait of a lady, by Helst (1248), exhibits a point lace collar and cuffs falling over a gown of pale blue satin, the stomacher of which is plentifully sprinkled with pearls, and trimmed with gold braid.

One of the most beautiful paintings of lace is that in a portrait of a lady by Maas in Brussels (see page 122). Her quadruple ruff of cutwork, with its vandyked edges, stands out sharply and clearly against the dark background of her dress, the frills gradually blending one with another as they approach the face, and have only the lace below them as background. This is a good example of the ruffs of which such fun was made in the time of Elizabeth, and might almost have been one of those that the sixteenth-century chronicler had in mind when he says: "Now they have newly found out a more monstrous kind of ruff of twelve, yea, sixteen lengths apiece, set three or four times double, and it is of some, fitly called, three steps and a half to the gallows." The very mention of

the name of good Queen Bess recalls the numerous pictures in which she figures in gorgeous embroidery,

PORTRAIT OF A LADY, BY MAAS.

lace, and jewels. At Hatfield there is the famous portrait of the Queen in a robe sprinkled with eyes,

by Zucchero; and another at Hardwicke Hall, in which the bodice of her dress is worked with eye-let holes, from each of which hangs the needle and the remains of the thread supposed to have worked it.

Several of the persons whose portraits were painted by Rembrandt (850) and Coques (821) are represented as wearing vandyked collars of Greek lace. In Sebastiano Ricci's picture of the "Last Supper," in the Hampton Court Collection, the table is ornamented with cutwork; and lace similar to Macramé appears on a picture in the Louvre by Paul Veronese. The art of reproducing such minute details with the brush declined after the sixteenth century, and good paintings of lace are henceforward rare.

In most portraits of the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth centuries, embroidery appears in some form or other; as may be proved from a visit to any collection of pictures of the time. The women had the skirts and stomachers of their dresses richly trimmed with needlework; as also were their smocks or chemisettes, which, when especially elaborate, were allowed to show above the low-cut bodice. Gloves, too, were richly worked with silk and gems, and the belles often carried a handkerchief bordered

with needlepoint lace. The men did not then despise gold-worked vests, doublets, surcoats, sashes or scarves, cloaks, gloves and caps ; though, as a rule, the latter were jewelled rather than embroidered.

Embroidery or needlework of any kind in actual progress seems to have been seldom transmitted to canvas. With the exception of Penelope seated at her loom, in a picture by Pinturicchio (911), we find nothing of this kind in the National Gallery until we come to our own times. In Dante Gabriel Rossetti's remarkable picture, "The Annunciation," we note the embroidery frame, with a panel of red stretched in it, upon which is appropriately placed an unfinished conventional lily, standing by the foot of the pallet bed upon which the Virgin is reclining. Madame de Pompadour is represented at Hampton Court as working at her tambour frame, this being a style of embroidery to which she was very partial ; Sir Joshua Reynolds' group of the three daughters of Lord Waldegrave forms another instance of the use of a tambour frame. In a portrait of Queen Elizabeth as a young girl, in the possession of Mrs. Charles Atkins, and lent by her to the Tudor Exhibition, the Princess is represented as engaged in the execution of a piece of embroidery. Lace pillows

appear in several pictures; notably in an altar-piece at Louvain, ascribed to Quentin Matsys.

The art of painting such minor details as needle-work owes much to the fact that many of its early votaries were men who had sprung from the ranks, and were themselves originally goldsmiths, iron-workers, or embroiderers, and, in following their trade, were necessarily forced to learn much concerning the laws of design. This, as they turned their attention, in maturer years, to painting, became of use, and influenced their success in their new life. The existence, too, of guilds for members of almost every art enabled them to increase their knowledge of the intricacies of their vocation by associating with, and seeing the work of, other craftsmen.

CHAPTER VI.

EMBROIDERY IN LITERATURE.

"They who both webs and verses weave,
The first to thee, O, chaste Minerva, leave;
The latter, to the Muses they devote.
To me, Sabina, it appears a sin
To separate two things so near akin."

AUSONIUS.

THE poets of all nations and of all ages have not been slow in paying their tribute to embroidery, and have endowed their heroines with skill in weaving or ornamenting dainty textiles; they lay frequent stress, too, upon the opportunities these occupations afford for the display of shapely white hands and a graceful figure. In reading many of these descriptions we can but regret that so little is left of the works of art to which they refer; and thus we echo the sentiments of Mr. Oscar Wilde's hero, Dorian Grey. "Where," he said, "was the great crocus-coloured robe, on which the gods fought against the giants, that had been worked for

Athena? Where the huge velarium that hero had stretched across the Colosseum at Rome, on which were represented the starry sky, and Apollo driving a chariot drawn by white, gilt-reined steeds? He longed to see the curious table-napkins wrought for Elagabalus, on which were displayed all the dainties and viands that could be wanted for a feast; the mortuary cloth of King Chilperic, with its three hundred golden bees; the fantastic robes that excited the indignation of the Bishop of Pontus, and were figured with 'lions, panthers, bears, dogs, forests, rocks, hunters; all, in fact, that a painter can copy from nature'; and the coat that Charles of Orleans once wore, on the sleeves of which were embroidered the verses of a song beginning, '*Madame, je suis tout joyeux*,' the musical accompaniment of the words being wrought in gold thread, and each note, of square shape in those days, formed with four pearls."

For the existence of these embroideries we have good authority; but it is more than probable that most of the needlework detailed in the literature of different countries lived but in the imagination of the poets themselves; though that they must have seen something analogous to them to be glorified and endowed with further beauties is equally

certain. It is supposed, for instance, that the Greek poets described the embroideries they had heard of as executed by the Babylonians and Egyptians. There is no doubt that Egyptian ladies delighted to array themselves in gorgeous attire, and induced the Hebrew women to emulate their aptitude and skill in producing such needlework; for some of the earliest references to embroidery are found in Scripture, and we are all familiar with the minute description given of the hangings of the tabernacle, "of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen, wrought with needlework." *

The very robes of the priests are detailed in much the same language; and the veil of the temple in later days is mentioned as "of blue, and purple, and crimson, and fine linen, and wrought cherubims thereon." † Where, again, shall we find a more graphic description of the real gold thread used in the embroidery of the day than in the following verse?—"They did beat the gold into thin plates, and cut it into wires, to work it in the blue, and in the purple, and in the scarlet, and in fine linen, with cunning work." ‡

* Exodus xxvi. 36. † 2 Chronicles iii. 14.
‡ Exodus xxxix. 3.

Small wonder that the happy possessors of secular embroideries wrought in this fashion reckoned them as part of their worldly wealth, or that the spoils of conquering kings consisted largely of "purple robes inwrought and stiff with gold" * to which we find such frequent allusion in Homer. "A goodly Babylonish garment" † formed part of the booty stolen by Achan at the time of the taking of Jericho; and we read of the "divers colours of needlework on both sides," ‡ which the mother of Sisera was expecting to form a portion of the spoils brought home by her son from his conquests.

With all these, and many more passing allusions, we come upon little that gives any clue as to the original makers of these gorgeous embroideries. An exception is, however, to be found in Ezekiel, where we read of "fine linen with broidered work from Egypt"; § and further on of the "emeralds, purple, and broidered work, and fine linen" ‖ from Syria; and how the merchants of Sheba, Asshur, and Chilmad, were "merchants in all sorts of things, in blue clothes" (these, Sir George Birdwood con-

* *Odyssey*, book i., line 212; book iv., line 406; *Iliad*, book xxiv., line 284.

† Joshua vii. 21.

‡ Judges v. 30.

§ Ezekiel xxvii. 7.

‖ Ezekiel xxvii. 16.

siders, were probably cashmere shawls, the manufacture of which is very ancient), "and broidered work, and in chests of rich apparel, bound with cords, and made of cedar." * Such chests, too, are frequently mentioned by Homer as containing rich vestments and needle-wrought garments; and some such allusions are, quoting Sir George Birdwood again, "photographic vignettes from any wealthy Indian Settia's house; and in copying them one seems to breathe again the very odours of the costus and costly spikenard which native gentlemen wrap up with their rich apparel and fine muslins and embroidered work." So, too, the robe of Ulysses, detailed in the "Iliad," is an accurate description of a "Benares *shikargah*, or 'happy hunting ground' *kincob*"; thus affording "proof of the traditional descent of the *kincobs* of Benares, through the looms of Babylon, and Tyre, and Alexandria, from designs and technical methods which probably, in prehistoric times, originated in India itself."

"In ample mode,
A robe of military purple flow'd
O'er all his frame: illustrious on his breast
The double-clasping gold the king confess'd.
In the rich woof a hound, Mosaic drawn,
Bore on full stretch, and seiz'd a dappled fawn:

* Ezekiel xxvii. 23, 24.

Deep in the neck his fangs indent their hold ;
They pant, and struggle in the moving gold.
Fine as the filmy web beneath it shone
A vest, that dazzled like a cloudless sun.
The female train, who round him throng'd to gaze,
In silent wonder sigh'd unwilling praise."*

Homer, likewise, pays due tribute to the skill of the Sidonian or Phœnician women :—

" There lay the vestures of no vulgar art,
Sidonian maids embroider'd every part,
Whom from soft Sidon youthful Paris bore,
With Helen touching on the Tyrian shore."†

That the Greeks, and, copying them, the Romans, considered the arts of embroidery and weaving the fitting occupations for women we have abundant proof in their literature. In their houses the loom was a conspicuous article of furniture ; and the mistress of the home, while reserving the higher branches of the work for herself, spent much of her time in superintending and directing the labours of her handmaidens :—

" Seek thou the queen along the rooms of state ;
Her royal hand a wondrous work designs ;
Around a circle of bright damsels shines,
Part twist the threads, and part the wool dispose.
While with the purple web the spindle glows."‡

* *Odyssey*, book xix., line 261.
† *Iliad*, book vi., line 360.
‡ *Odyssey*, book vi., line 366.

Again :— "The queen her hours bestow'd
In curious works ; the whirling spindle glow'd
With crimson threads, while busy damsels cull
The snowy fleece, or twist the purpled wool."*

It is to be supposed that the looms used were altogether lighter and more portable than those with which Europe became familiar when carpets and tapestry hangings of a large size were made ; but the articles of both male and female dress afforded ample and abundant scope for the display of skill in design and taste in the management of the colours. The veils worn by the Greek women were often elaborate in the extreme, as may be gathered by the following—

"Pallas disrobes ; her radiant veil unty'd,
With flowers adorn'd, with art diversify'd,
(The labor'd veil her heavenly fingers wove)
Flows on the pavement of the court of Jove."†

And fabrics of every hue and make were in frequent demand for covering funeral biers, for enwrapping cinerary urns—

"The snowy bones his friends and brothers place
(With tears collected) in a golden vase :
The golden vase in purple palls they roll'd,
Of softest texture, and inwrought with gold" ;‡

for covering thrones and couches—

* *Odyssey*, book vi., line 61. † *Iliad*, book v., line 904.
‡ *Iliad*, book xxiv., line 1003.

"Fair thrones within from space to space were rais'd,
Where various carpets with embroidery blaz'd,
The work of matrons";*

for decorating the houses at the time of festivals—

"Behold these broideries! Finer saw you never.

* * * * *

"Ye gods! What artists work'd these pictures in;
What kind of painter could these clear lines limn?
How true they stand! Nay, lifelike, moving ever.
Not worked—created! Woman, thou art clever";†

for propitiatory offerings—

"The largest mantle your full wardrobes hold,
Most priz'd for art, and labor'd o'er with gold,
Before the Goddess' honor'd knees be spread";‡

and again—

"The Phrygian queen to her rich wardrobe went,
Where treasur'd odours breath'd a costly scent.

* * * * *

"Here, as the queen revolv'd with careful eyes
The various textures and the various dyes,
She chose a veil that shone superior far,
And glow'd refulgent as the morning star."§

That needlework, or its equivalent, was balm

* *Odyssey*, book vii., line 124.
† *Theocritus*, Idyl xv., line 78.
‡ *Iliad*, book vi., line 340.
§ *Iliad*, book vi., line 358.

to a woman's heart distressed was evidently the masculine idea then, as it often is nowadays :—

"Her (Helen) in the palace, at her loom she found ;
The golden web her own sad story crown'd.
The Trojan wars she weav'd (herself the prize) ;
And the dire triumphs of her fatal eyes."*

Penelope, of course, has ever been the type of an industrious, faithful woman :—

" . . . . At once the generous train complies,
Nor fraud mistrusts in virtue's fair disguise.
The work she plied ; but studious of delay,
By night revers'd the labours of the day.
While thrice the sun his annual journey made,
The conscious lamp the midnight fraud survey'd ;
Unheard, unseen, three years her arts prevail ;
The fourth, her maid unfolds th' amazing tale."†

A very different picture from these is that given of the seductive Circe and her strange, weird singing, which one can fancy ringing through the hollow rooms of the palace in rhythm with the rattle of the shuttle:—

"Plac'd at her loom within, the goddess sung ;
The vaulted roofs and solid pavement rung.
O'er the fair web the rising figures shine,
Immortal labour ! worthy hands divine."‡

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* *Iliad*, book iii., line 169.
† *Odyssey*, book ii., line 115.
‡ *Odyssey*, book x., line 254.

Such references as these might be multiplied without end, but it is rarely that we find any mention made of the more practical details of the work as actually executed. Probably the reason for this is to be found in the fact that weaving and embroidery were such common pursuits as to pass unnoticed by the poets. One of the most graphic descriptions of tapestry weaving is that given by Ovid. This is interesting as showing how little the main details of the work have changed in all the ages that have elapsed since the lines were written, and goes far to prove, from the facility with which the description is made, that the poet wrote it while the women of his own household were thus engaged :—

"The looms were set, the webs
Were hung ; beneath their fingers, nimbly plied,
The subtle fabrics grew, and warp and woof,
Transverse, with shuttle and with slay compact,
Were pressed in order fair. And either girt
Her mantle close, and eager wrought ; the toil
Itself was pleasure to the skilful hands
That knew so well their task. With Tyrian hue
Of purple blushed the texture, and all shades
Of colour, blending imperceptibly
Each into each. So, when the wondrous bow—
What time some passing shower hath dashed the sun—
Spans with its mighty arch the vault of Heaven,

A thousand colours deck it, different all.
Yet all so subtly interfused that each
Seems one with that which joins it, and the eye,
But by the contrast of the extremes, perceives
The intermediate change. And last, with thread
Of gold embroidery pictured on the web,
Lifelike expressed, some antique fable glowed."*

Another, but less detailed, description of the same operation is that in the "Odyssey,"—

"Some ply the loom; their busy fingers move
Like poplar leaves, when Zephyr fans the grove.
Not more renown'd the men of Scheria's isle,
For sailing arts and all the naval toil,
Than works of female skill their women's pride,
The flying shuttle through the threads to guide:
Pallas to these her double gifts imparts,
Inventive genius, and industrious arts."†

Even as the actual embroideries, or fragments of them, are scarce, so is little mention made of them in early English literature; and beyond a passing reference to the gold-embroidered hangings decking the hall of a Saxon noble in "Beowulf," and an allusion to ecclesiastical needlework in the "Vision of Piers the Plowman," we find nothing that is interesting as giving an insight into any special kind of employment followed by the women of

* *Ovid*, "Metamorphoses," book vi.
† *Odyssey*, book vii., line 134.

the day. In the old-world tales of "King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table" is the touching story of "The Lily Maid of Astolat," the description of whose labours I have already quoted with reference to the shield cover illustrated on another page, and "the reed sleeve of scarlet, well embroidered with grete peryls." These are, however, more familiar to us all from Tennyson's "Idylls" than from knowledge of the original. Similar incidents, illustrative of the wide scope afforded for the needles of the fair ones left at home, in the days of chivalry, with their pageants and knightly splendour, are given in such terms as these :—

"His fine, soft garments, wove with cunning skill
All over, ease and wantonness declare ;
These with her hand, such subtle toil well taught,
For him, in silk and gold, Alcina wrought."

And again, showing that even the horses shared in the finery of their masters—

"Each damsel and each dame who her obey'd,
She task'd together with herself to sew,
With subtle toil and with fine gold o'erlaid,
A piece of silk of white and sable hue ;
With this she trapt the horse."*

Chaucer gives some very dainty details of the

* *Orlando Furioso*, canto xxiii.

garb of a young woman who was tasteful and particular in her dress :—

"Fair was the yonge wyf, and therwithal
As eny wesil hir body gent and smal.
A seynt sche wered barred al of silk ;
A barm-cloth (apron) eek as whit as morne mylk
Upon hir lendes (loins), ful of many a gore.
Whit was hir smok, and browdid al byfore
And eek behynde on hir coler aboute,
Of cole-black silk, withinne and eek withoute.
The tapes of hir white voluper
Weren of the same sute of hire coler,
Hir filet brood of silk y-set ful heye."*

The low-cut dresses shaped to show the smock, of which women were justly proud, continued to be worn long after the time of Chaucer ; and as late as 1596 we find the following warning given in "Pleasant Quippes," by Stephen Gosson:—

"These Holland † smocks, as white as snow,
And gorgets brave, with drawn work wrought,
A tempting ware they are, you know,
Wherewith as nets vain youths are caught."

An allusion to the rich garb of the better class men is found in the portrait of the "yong Squyer":—

"Embrowdid was he, as it were a mede
Al ful of fresshe floures, white and rede."‡

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* *The Miller's Tale*, line 3233.

† Linen was frequently thus called.

‡ Prologue to *Canterbury Tales*, line 89.

This exhibits Chaucer's favourite habit of drawing his metaphors from Nature. From the days of Spenser onwards tapestry or "arras" figures largely in the descriptions given of the halls of the castles and mansions of the nobles :—

"For round about the walls y-clothed were
With goodly arras of great maiesty,
Woven with golde and silke so close and nere
That the rich metall lurked privily,
As faining to be hidd from envious eye.
Yet here, and there, and every where unawares
It shewd itselfe, and shown unwillingly ;
Like to a discolour'd snake, whose hidden snares
Through the greene gras his long bright burnisht back
declares."*

Shakespeare also shows his appreciation of the then little-known art of tapestry weaving by mentioning it as adorning the walls of kingly palaces, that of the King in Hamlet and the bedroom of Imogen being noteworthy examples. We get another picture of a richly-furnished house in the description of Gremio's home "within the city" :—

"My hangings all of Tyrian tapestry ;
In ivory coffers I have stuff'd my crowns ;
In cypress chests my arras, counterpoints,
Costly apparel, tents, and canopies,

* *Faërie Queene.* canto xi., stanza 28.

Fine linen, Turkey cushions boss'd with pearl,
Valance of Venice gold in needle-work ;
Pewter and brass, and all things that belong
To house or housekeeping."*

The delicate silken embroidery we often see on purses, satchels, work-bags, and letter cases, and on the skirts and stomachers of dresses of about the time of Elizabeth, was doubtless in the mind of the poet as he wrote such passages as the following :—

"(Marina) . . . with her neeld composes
Nature's own shape, of bud, bird, branch, or berry,
That even her art sisters the natural roses."†

And again :—

"We . . . (Hermia and Helena)
Have with our neelds created both one flower,
Both on one sampler, sitting on one cushion,
Both warbling of one song, both in one key ;
As if our hands, our sides, voices, and minds,
Had been incorporate."‡

We do not get so minute an account of the stitchery with which Volumnia and Virgilia sought to while away the weary hours of their son and husband's absence ; but that it was very possibly some dainty work that the bard had in his mind

* *Taming of the Shrew*, Act II., scene i.
† *Pericles*, Act. V., scene i.
‡ *Midsummer Night's Dream*, Act III., scene ii.

we gather from the petulant retort of Valeria on realising the non-success of all her attempts to persuade the wife to leave her work, and go forth with her :—" You would be another Penelope : yet, they say, all the yarn she spun in Ulysses' absence did but fill Ithaca full of moths. Come ; I would your cambric were sensible as your finger, that you might leave pricking it for pity."* Cambric was introduced into England only in the time of Queen Elizabeth, and was probably thought so highly of as a material for embroidery that the poet no doubt had seen many fashionable ladies of the time at work upon it, and paused not to consider whether it was thus used or even known in the time of Coriolanus.

Here is the picture of the accomplishments of a country squire's daughter in the reign of Queen Elizabeth :—

> " The silk well couth she twist and twine,
> And make the fine march pine,
> And with the needle work." †

A " march pine " is a large quilt or counterpane, often made of hand-spun linen, of which we still have many left. Very elaborate pieces of work they are too, being almost covered with large

* *Coriolanus*, Act I., scene iii. † Drayton.

flaunting designs, closely embroidered with stitches of silk or crewels.

In the reign of Charles I. lived John Taylor, who has received the title of "water-poet," from having at one time followed the calling of a waterman on the Thames. His "Needle's Excellency," or a "New Book of Patterns, with a Poem in Praise of the Needle," published in 1640, gives interesting details, and is indeed a veritable encyclopœdia respecting the style of work in vogue at this period. The book is now very rare, and perfect copies scarcely exist, owing to the plates having been torn out to serve as models for embroidery. From this poem are taken the following extracts, with the inventory of the stitches then in use. The poet thus eulogises the needle itself:—

"A needle (though it be both small and slender)
Yet it is both a maker and a mender,
A grave Reformer of old rents decay'd,
Stops holes and seames and desperate cuts display'd.
And thus without the needle, we may see,
We should without our bibs and biggins be;
No shirts or smockes our nakedness to hide,
No garments gay to make us magnifide."

And much more in the same strain:—

"For tent worke, rais'd worke, laid worke, *frorst* worke,
net worke,
Most curious purles, or rare Italian cut worke,

Fire *ferne* stitch, *finny* stitch, *new* stitch, and chain stitch,
Brave bred (braid) stitch, *Fisher* stitch, *Irish* stitch, and
Queen stitch ;
The Spanish stitch, *Rosemary* stitch, and *Mowle* stitch ;
The smarting whip stitch, back stitch, and the cross
stitch—
All these are good, and these we must allow,
And these are everywhere in practice now."

Times change so that I fancy no embroideress of the present day knows anything about the stitches printed in italics in the above quotation. Queen stitch was probably something that was characteristic of the work of the time of Queen Elizabeth, and very likely was quite different to that which we know now under that name. Spanish stitch reminds us of Queen Mary, and was no doubt named in compliment to her. To both these ladies the water-poet pays the most fulsome compliments respecting their achievements. Many of the stitches named had reference to hand-made lace rather than to embroidery.

Lace has gained scarcely more than a passing notice from any of our poets. Shakespeare, in *Twelfth-Night*, makes one such allusion : "The free maids, that weave their threads with bones" ; but the brilliant colours, gold threads, and designs called forth for embroidery naturally, perhaps,

attracted more notice than the prosaic-looking pillows and bone bobbins and pins of the lace-makers. Mrs. Bury Palliser gives the following details respecting a Latin poem written by Jacob Van Eyck, the Flemish poet and painter, who sang the praises of lace-making: "Of many arts one surpasses all; the threads woven by the strange power of the hand, threads which the dropping spider would in vain attempt to imitate, and which Pallas would confess she had never known. For the maiden, seated at her work, plies her fingers rapidly, and flashes the smooth balls and thousand threads into the circle. Often she fastens with her hand the innumerable needles, to bring out the various figures of the pattern; often, again, she unfastens them; and in this her amusement makes as much profit as the man earns by the sweat of his brow; and no maiden ever complains at even of the length of the day. The issue is a fine web, open to the air with many an aperture, which feeds the pride of the whole globe, which encircles with its fine border cloaks and tuckers, and shows grandly round the throats and hands of kings; and, what is more surprising, this web is of the lightness of a feather; while in its price is too heavy for our purses."

Many writers, from the seventeenth century down-

wards, allude to the almost universal favour in which Flemish lace was held, and passages such as the following abound :—

> " In French embroidery and in Flanders lace
> I'll spend the income of a treasurer's place."

Again :—

> " For lace, let Flanders bear away the belle."

And Pepys, man-milliner as he was, makes frequent mention of the rich laces and embroideries then in vogue amongst the upper classes. That he, man of taste, held French embroidery in high esteem, nearly a hundred years before the writer quoted above, is evident from the following passage, which may be taken as an example of many others:—

" 22*nd* April, 1661. The King's going from the Tower to Whitehall—it is impossible to relate the glory of this day, expressed in the clothes of them that rid, and their horses, and horses' clothes. Among others, my Lord Sandwich's embroidery and diamonds were not ordinary among them. The King in a most rich embroidered suit and cloak looked most noble. In the evening, by water to White Hall to my Lord's, and there I spoke my Lord. He talked with me about his suit, which was made in France, and cost him £200, and very rich it is with embroidery."

We know nowadays that many of these richly worked suits were sent from France to be embroidered in the East, and were then returned to be made up as required.

The catalogue given by the worthy Mrs. Primrose of the accomplishments of her daughters would put many a latter-day young lady to the blush :—

"They understand their needle, bread-stitch, cross and change, and all manner of plain work; they can pink, point, and frill, and know something of music; they can do up small clothes, and work upon catgut." *

Coming nearer still to our own times, we find that Cowper has left us many a picture of domestic life in the good old times in England, before the sewing-machine and bobbin-lace machine were invented to drive hand-made needlework and lace into oblivion :—

"Yon cottager, who weaves at her own door,
Pillows and bobbins all her little store;
Content though mean, and cheerful, if not gay,
Shuffling her threads about the livelong day,
Just earns a scanty pittance, and at night
Lies down secure, her heart and pocket light.
She, for her humble sphere by nature fit,
Has little understanding, and no wit."

* *Vicar of Wakefield*, Chapter xi.

From the last few lines it is clear that lace-making was no more profitable then than it is now; and the poet seems possessed of the idea that few "brains" are needed for the art. No wonder, then, that England has never been famous for the beauty and originality of her laces.

The needlework of the time is also graphically described by the same poet in the following lines :—

"O'er the seat, with plenteous wadding stuff'd,
Induced a splendid cover, green and blue,
Yellow and red, of tapestry richly wrought
And woven close, or needlework sublime.
There might ye see the peony spread wide,
The full-blown rose, the shepherd and his lass,
Lapdog and lambkin, with black staring eyes,
And parrots with twin cherries in their beak." *

Again in *The Winter Evening* :—

"Here the needle plies its busy task,
The pattern grows, the well-depicted flower,
Wrought patiently into the snowy lawn,
Unfolds its bosom ; buds, and leaves, and sprigs,
And curling tendrils, gracefully disposed,
Follow the nimble finger of the fair ;
A wreath, that cannot fade, of flowers that blow
With most success when all besides decay." †

Most modern writers put some kind of dainty embroidery into the hands of their heroines, and

* *The Sofa.* † *The Winter Evening.*

this, from a woman's point of view, often serves to mark the date at which the book was written. It is to be noted how the heroines, in the early days of the century, made purses—Becky Sharp, for example, sets to work at a purse with which she hopes to charm the heart of Joe Sedley—and watch-guards. We all know how Lucy Snowe tries to please the capricious Paul Emanuel with the present of a watch-chain made of silks and sparkling beads. Rather later, heroines are engaged in adorning collars and cuffs with fine white stitchery. Berlin woolwork was long a favourite occupation with these dream-ladies ; and one fears that Tennyson's "quaint macaw" was in this style of art, as also were Shirley's Parma violets. Yet more recent writers make their heroines embroider green serge curtains with sunflowers, thus marking the time of the æsthetic craze. It is seldom that an author chooses for his heroine such a prosaic occupation as that of mending gloves ; but it is thus that we find Miriam employed in Hawthorne's "Transformation" on a certain notable occasion. George Eliot rarely condescends in her books to a topic so purely feminine as needlework; though some pretty toying goes on between Stephen Guest and Lucy Deane over the dainty little lady's fancy work, and

most women appreciate wilful Maggie Tulliver's apt description of the patchwork that it was considered necessary for every little girl to prick her fingers over. "It's foolish work," she says, "tearing things to pieces to sew 'em together again." *

Many writers have made needlework play a pathetic part in the action of their stories. Take, for instance, Flora Mc'Ivor, busied in preparing "what appeared to Waverley to be white bridal favours"—really the cockades worn by the adherents of the Young Pretender. "Now," she says, later on, "I am sewing his (Fergus') bridal garment" †; and that was—a white flannel shroud. In Dickens' "Christmas Carol," too, how pathetic is the scene in which Scrooge sees in his dream the mother and sister of Tiny Tim engaged in sewing. "The mother laid her work on the table, and put her hand to her face. 'The colour hurts my eyes,' she said." ‡ But the scene soon undergoes a happy change, and we are able to appreciate the hearty fun with which the story is brought to a conclusion.

Few references to spinning, and there are many both in ancient and modern writers, can equal that

* *The Mill on the Floss*, chapter ii.
† "Waverley," chapter xxvi.
‡ "Christmas Carol," stave iv.

given by Longfellow, the very ring of the words appearing to echo the whirring sound of the wheel :—

"Seated beside her wheel, and the carded wool like a snow-drift
Piled at her knee, her white hands feeding the ravenous spindle,
While with her foot on the treadle she guided the wheel in its motion." *

* * * * *

"Ever of her he thought, when he read in the Bible on Sunday
Praise of the virtuous woman, as she is described in the Proverbs,—
How the heart of her husband doth safely trust in her always,
How all the days of her life she will do him good and not evil,
How she seeketh the wool and the flax and worketh with gladness,
How she layeth her hand to the spindle and holdeth the distaff,
How she is not afraid of the snow for herself or her household,
Knowing her household are clothed with the scarlet cloth of her weaving!
So as she sat at her wheel one afternoon in the Autumn,
Alden, who opposite sat, and was watching her dexterous fingers,
As if the thread she was spinning were that of his life and his fortune." †

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* *Courtship of Miles Standish*, part iii.

† *Ibid.*, part viii.

Most workers, too, can appreciate the following graphic description of a sufficiently homely action :—

"Straight uprose from her wheel the beautiful Puritan maiden,
Pleased with the praise of her thrift from him whose praise was the sweetest,
Drew from the reel on the table a snowy skein of her spinning,
Thus making answer, meanwhile, to the flattering phrases of Alden :
'Come, you must not be idle ; if I am a pattern for housewives,
Show yourself equally worthy of being the model of husbands ;
Hold this skein on your hands, while I wind it ready for knitting.
Then who knows but hereafter, when fashions have changed and the manners,
Fathers may talk to their sons of the good old times of John Alden!'
Thus, with a jest and a laugh, the skein on his hands she adjusted,
He sitting awkwardly there, with his arms extended before him,
She, standing graceful, erect, and winding the thread from his fingers,
Sometimes chiding a little his clumsy manner of holding,
Sometimes touching his hands, as she disentangled expertly
Twist or knot in the yarn, unawares—for how could she help it ?—
Sending electrical thrills through every nerve in his body."*

* *Courtship of Miles Standish*, part viii.

Such are the pleasing pictures given of a thrifty New England housewife, a type that is well-nigh extinct; but few housewives of any country, from force of circumstances nowadays, will answer to the description given by John Wallington, a sixteenth-century tanner of Eastcheap, of his mother. It is quoted thus in Green's History: "She was a pattern of sobriety unto many; very seldom was seen abroad except at church; when others recreated themselves at holidays and other times she would take her needlework, and say, 'Here is my recreation.'"

CHAPTER VII.

LACE.

"More subtile web Arachne cannot spin,
Nor the fine nets, which oft we woven see,
Of scorched deaw, do not in th' ayre more lightly flee."

Faërie Queene, book ii., canto xii.

MANY writers hold the opinion that lace owes its origin to the difficulty of disposing of the unravelled ends of linen garments and hangings; but it is more likely that, although this definitely accounts for the first formation of fringes with ornamental headings, such as still survive in the various kinds of macramé, the art of lace-making was more gradual in its evolution. It is probable that it started with the simpler kinds of drawn-thread work, which, for their part, might well have originated with the mending of worn places in a linen fabric in which either the warp or woof threads had been fretted away, leaving the others intact and capable of being, without much difficulty, knotted into simple patterns by the needle of the skilful

mender. However this may be, it is certain that the arts of lace making and embroidery run one into the other so constantly that it is not easy to distinguish them completely. The same stitches are often employed in both, but lace is more frequently white than parti-coloured, like embroidery. An important point of difference is, that whereas embroidery is executed upon a material already perfect in itself, the lace-maker forms the fabric entirely during the progress of the work. When a ready-made material is used, such as the linen in the various kinds of cutwork, its character is greatly altered by the withdrawal of many of the threads; so that it is used rather as giving additional strength to the stitches than as serving as a background or foundation for the work.

Although we have sufficient evidence to prove that lace, and especially such as was made with gold and silver threads, was well known to the people of ancient civilisations, no specimens of their work have come down to us. For many centuries lace was regarded, owing to the amount of labour required in making it, as sacred to the service of religion only; and it was as late as the fourteenth century before it came into anything like general use. Even then for many years kings and queens alone had the

privilege of using it in any quantity ; but later on the nobles adopted it, and it soon became employed in such lavish profusion that more than one case is on record of an elegant who became ruined owing to his extravagance in lace for the trimmings of his cravats, ruffles, and boots. The formation of laws for the suppression of this lavishness was frequent during the latter end of the seventeenth century, and since then the wearing of lace by men has gradually ceased. It is still employed in the service of the Church, more especially in the Roman Catholic ; but, as far as ladies' dress is concerned, the dictates of fashion and the invention of methods of making lace by machinery have cast a death blow at hand-made laces. Some few kinds of lace will ever exist and flourish, owing to their well-established reputation as favourites ; but the lace industry of our own country, with the exception, perhaps, of Honiton lace, has for many years been slowly but steadily dying out, despite the earnest endeavours of many to revive it.

Lace is roughly divided into two classes, needle-point and pillow lace. The former of these is subdivided into cutwork, Reticella, lacis, and knotted lace, Venetian and Spanish point, Alençon, and many others. Pillow laces, also, are variously classed

according to the localities in which they were originally made, and in other cases according to the groundwork or *réseau*. The name cutwork (*point coupé*) has been applied to the earliest known form of needlepoint lace; and laces of this type are to be traced back to the eleventh century, when they were made in the seclusion of the nunneries, the most jealous care being exercised to prevent the method of making them from becoming generally known. They were mainly used for priestly garments and for the shrouds of Church dignitaries and royal personages. The fashion for cutwork lasted till well on in the seventeenth century, the designs, judging from such pattern books as are left, being mainly geometrical, and worked, as it were, according to the grain of the linen foundation. The threads which formed the main divisions of the design in genuine cutwork were stretched in a frame according to their required position, and were then backed with fine lawn. This served to strengthen the threads, and to stiffen the back of the thicker portions of the embroidery, and was cut and drawn away wherever the pattern was required to be fully open. As cutwork developed the stitches were made entirely upon the laid threads without the aid of linen, the work being backed and stiffened

with parchment. The later the work the more elaborate were the picots with which the edges of the designs were finished, the patterns becoming more solid and the workmanship more complicated.

Drawn-thread work may be described as a variety of cutwork. In this some of the threads of the linen foundation were withdrawn, either in a vertical or horizontal direction, and those remaining were overcast in several ways to form a geometrical design. The art is a very ancient one, and apparently fell into disuse for centuries, to be revived in the South of Europe in the twelfth century. The "twined linen" of Scripture is supposed to have been a species of drawn-thread work. This kind of lace has been brought to great perfection in India and other Eastern countries ; but although it has been recently brought forward as an occupation for ladies, the specimens produced are far below the excellence of many that were worked in the last century. Some of these consist of the finest muslin, the threads of which are partially removed, and the remainder oversewn, to make a *réseau* resembling net in fineness. Each tiny section of the design, which was generally very elaborate, is often filled in a different manner with dainty stitches. The eyesight required must have been strong indeed to

withstand the strain of such minute work; and that it was executed so admirably is all the more wonderful when we remember that an oil-lamp or candle afforded the only artificial light then known, and that for various reasons the windows which admitted daylight were neither so numerous nor so large, nor the glass so clear, as at the present day.

Darned lacis seems to have been the next development of hand-made lace, though in its earlier forms it is by no means so elaborate as the Reticellas and Greek laces. It was known as *Punta a maglia*, *opus filatorium*, and *point conté*. The foundation was a fine make of linen, certain of the threads of which were removed in each direction to make a series of small squares. These were closely overcast with stitches by way of strengthening the bars, and the openings thus made were filled in with a formal pattern in darning stitch, or *point de toile*, or linen stitch. Some of the later designs for this work are very quaint, representing scenes from contemporary history, or figures emblematic of the seasons of the year, the months, etc., and often with mottoes and legends in and about the work.

There are some beautiful coverlets in the South Kensington Museum made in this early style of lace, the squares of which are not unfrequently

united with bands of cutwork. Nowadays such *réseaux* are netted, the stitches are greatly increased, both in variety and number, the designs are far more elaborate, and the result is known as *Guipure d'art*. This has unfortunately fallen, of late years, into disrepute, owing to the facility with which the machines turn out squares, to be sold for a few pence each, so exactly resembling the hand-work, that in many cases only one who has been accustomed to execute the lace herself can tell the difference between them.

Greek point is that form of cutwork which was made in the islands of the Grecian Archipelago and round about the southern shores of Italy. It can be distinguished from those of an earlier date by the introduction of wheels, triangles, loops, and half-circles in and between the geometrical lines of the pattern itself, no linen being employed as in Reticella. True needlepoint lace is that formed without the assistance of a background of linen; hence its old name of *punto in aria*, which still survives in modern French names for certain of the stitches used in crochet. The earliest laces of this class are supposed to have been first made in Italy in the fifteenth century; though this country contends with Spain for the honour of having pro-

duced the first needle-made laces. In Spain these thick laces were supposed to have been introduced by the Jews, as the quality of the work is said to have deteriorated after their expulsion from Spain in the fifteenth century; but it is more probable that the art was followed by the Moors. These laces were by no means composed solely of flaxen threads, but of the richest gold and silver threads blended lavishly with coloured strands.

Spanish and Venetian points have so much in common that it is often difficult even for a connoisseur to recognise the difference between them. This is accounted for by the fact that the inmates of the religious houses, where it was principally made, frequently travelled between Spain and Italy, sometimes taking up their abode in one country, sometimes in the other. The Spanish or Rose points of the best periods have little or no ground, the design being continuous, and connected only here and there with fine bars. The design for the lace was drawn upon parchment or paper, backed with linen. The various sections or details of the pattern were then drawn separately upon a second piece of parchment, in which holes arranged in pairs were pricked at stated intervals. The thread outlining the details was laid over these holes, and

secured with stitches brought up from the wrong side of the parchment. The fine fillings between the outlines were composed mainly of buttonhole stitches, worked with the finest thread, and grouped so as to form chevrons, open network, vandykes, open and close squares, and dozens of other patterns, according to the arrangement of the wee holes made by missing a stitch here and there. When all the sections were thus prepared they were removed from this parchment, and tacked into place upon the second piece, on which the complete pattern had been drawn. They were then joined with the heavy *cordonnets*, which were raised to the required height by means of a padding of soft cotton, this being worked over closely with buttonhole stitch. These thick *cordonnets* were edged with dainty ornaments, the beauty of which greatly enhances that of the work. They are known as *fleurs volantes*, and are distinguished as *couronnes*, loops, spines, thorns, knots, and picots. *Couronnes* are what we know, in other kinds of work, as open scallops ; spines are made of a tiny loop of thread twisted round a pin, and held down with buttonhole stitches worked into the *couronnes* of which they form a part. An excellent example of this type of lace is that on page 162, which I am enabled to figure

PORTION OF LACE FLOUNCE.

(In possession of Her Majesty the Queen.)

here by permission of Her Majesty the Queen. Before the lace was taken off the parchment the thicker portions of the work were polished with a small ivory tool known as an "aficot."

Venetian laces are, as a rule, much lighter and more fragile as to design, and are worked with fine brides or bars, as a connection for the various parts of the pattern. The open lace stitches, also, are more often used than the heavier darning and buttonhole fillings with which the Spanish work is finished. There can be no better object lesson than that given by a visit to the textile court of the South Kensington Museum, where are displayed specimens of laces that have never been finished, and hence illustrate the exact method of the execution.

Venice, in the time of her greatest prosperity, had established a reputation for her rich laces; a fashion for which existed in most of the countries of Europe. In France, whither it is necessary to turn to understand the development of lace, the fancy for Venetian lace had run riot; and such enormous sums of money were annually sent out of the country in payment for the various accessories of the dress of both men and women, that Colbert sought so to turn the tide as to divert some, at least, of the stream into his own land. With this

object in view, he persuaded sundry Italian workers to settle at Alençon, and to teach the art of making needlepoint to French embroideresses. This plan succeeded for a time; but French taste never took kindly to the heavy fillings and *cordonnets* of the Italian lace, and the workers soon bethought themselves of balancing the effect of these by the insertion of open backgrounds of bars and brides, which, in their turn, gave way to more simple network grounds. All this, however, did not take place till after the death of Colbert, who did not live long enough to see the success of his endeavours. The *réseau* ground then became firmly established, and the designs lost their thickness, and gradually grew flowing and lighter. The labour of making the whole of the *réseau* ground with the needle must have been enormous; but the invention of the lace pillow soon lessened the task, and specimens of laces having net grounds, made with the needle, are now so rare as to be almost priceless.

In the later part of the reigns of Louis XIV. and XV. Alençon lace had reached its highest pinnacle of perfection. It was exported to most of the European countries and to England; and even in Venice, whence it had originated, the

demand for *Point de France* was enormous. The workers included women, children, and old men, and the making of lace involved many separate operations, which were divided amongst different persons. The worker who outlined the pattern could not make the fillings, and she who did the raised portions of the design did nothing to the flat parts ; while yet others joined the sprays, and added the footing or *engrêlure*. So great was the division of labour that a length of this lace required eighteen workers to complete it. The much-raised *cordonnet* in the best Alençon lace is diminished to simple buttonholing over horsehair. The art of making Alençon lace still flourishes, though machine-made *réseau* now takes the place of that worked with the needle, the *vrai réseau* only being used for such flounces and veils as are worn by royal personages at weddings and on state occasions.

Argentan lace, with which Alençon is often confounded, is supposed to have been first made by some of the Alençon workers. It differs from the older form in having closer and thicker fillings and flatter *cordonnets*. The ground of Argentan lace was known as *bride épingle*, and consisted of a six-sided mesh, worked round with buttonhole

PORTION OF LACE FLOUNCE.
(In possession of Her Majesty the Queen.)

stitches. The manufacture of this lace became extinct at the time of the French Revolution, and, in consequence, a higher price is placed on it by collectors than upon Alençon. The flounce of which a portion is illustrated on p. 166 is remarkable for the variety of the fillings included in it. It is now in the possession of Her Majesty the Queen, through whose gracious permission I am enabled to illustrate it here. The lace on p. 168 also belongs to Her Majesty, and was formerly the property of Marie Leczinska, consort of Louis XV. of France, whose initials are incorporated with the design.

Knotted laces, such as still survive in our macramé, were undoubtedly the precursors of pillow lace, the use of bobbins becoming necessary as soon as the worker conceived the idea of making a long length from above downwards on the pillow instead of horizontally, as in knotted work, or *punto a groppo*. The stitches, if I may so call them, are based upon a variety of knots, many of which are executed in precisely the same way as the buttonhole stitches in the more advanced style of needlepoint. From the use made of long ends or lengths of thread, the idea has arisen that this is the kind of lace that owed its origin, as before said, to the

PORTION OF LACE FLOUNCE.
(In possession of Her Majesty the Queen.)

difficulty of preventing the raw edges of various materials from becoming unravelled. At the same time the fringed character was not wanting to these knotted laces, for in most patterns the unused portion of the strands was allowed to hang loosely as a fringe.

Pillow-lace making is supposed to have spread over the rest of Europe from Flanders; and, as usual, the most highly prized specimens are those of which the *réseau* was made before the introduction of the machine-made nets, which nowadays have almost entirely superseded that worked by hand. Though, as works of art, pillow-made laces take a lower rank than needlepoint, yet to the bobbins we owe the lovely Brussels and Mechlin, and the useful and durable Guipure and Valenciennes.

The general principle on which all pillow laces are made is the same, the chief variation consisting in the pattern and ground. The shape of the pillow varies slightly in different localities, being sometimes round, sometimes oval like a bolster. Some lace-workers hold it in their laps, others have it set more conveniently in a stand or rack; others, again, have it fixed into a sort of basket, in which it is easily carried from place

to place without disarranging the work. Two sets of bobbins are filled with the various threads required: one set, known as the "hangers," or "passive" bobbins, forms a foundation, over which the second set, the active bobbins, is twined, and so answers to the warp threads in weaving. These bobbins are attached to the pillow, on which is pinned a piece of parchment, having the pattern marked on it as a series of small holes, into each of which a pin is pushed during the progress of the lace, the threads being twined more or less elaborately round the pins by the bobbins. The greater part of the design is generally worked in what is known as "cloth" stitch. This, in its simplest form, gives much the effect of darning, and appears as often in pillow-made laces as do buttonhole stitch and its varieties in needlepoint, being capable, also, of nearly as much change. The grounds of pillow laces are classed under two headings, "bar" and "net-work." The former, as its name implies, plays the same part as do the *brides ornées* of the needle-made laces, and is arranged by plaiting together about four threads, and forming small picots or purls on either side of the bar thus made. The net grounds are usually formed of a hexagonal mesh, pins being pushed

into the pattern to mark out each angle of the hexagon. Many of these honeycomb nets are made upon the pillow in a series of narrow strips, the joining together of which requires a special training, the necessary stitch being so delicate that it is impossible to discover the seam unaided by a magnifying glass.

Brussels is one of the few centres of the lace-making industry which has enjoyed an unrivalled reputation from the time of its first introduction there, in the fifteenth century, to the present day. As with other countries, the earliest Flemish laces were mere copies of the Venetian and Spanish, and, later on, of the Alençon and Argentan points; but the designs became changed with the fashion of the day, the slighter patterns, as a rule, marking the more recent date of the lace. The flax, costing often £240 a livre, used for Brussels lace was so fine and delicate that it was damaged by exposure to light and air, and, in consequence, was spun in dark, damp cellars, lighted only by a single shaft from the outside, much to the detriment of the health and eyesight of the workers. The lace made in Brussels soon became so highly prized that the English Government found it necessary to protect the lace made

in its own country by forbidding the entry of Brussels lace. This did not prevent it from being smuggled, and we are all familiar with many of the romantic and adventurous tales told in connection with this practice.

Animals, even, were occasionally made the means of smuggling across the frontier. A story is told, by Mrs. Bury Palliser, of a dog, in particular, who was for some time previous to the adventure kept on short commons on one side of the frontier till he became sufficiently emaciated to serve the purpose of the smugglers. The skin of a larger dog was then slipped over the poor creature, the space between being filled in with closely packed layers of lace. The story relates that the dog was glad enough to escape to his former home on the other side of the frontier, where, it is to be hoped, he was released from his imprisonment, and indulged with better fare in future. The Brussels lace smuggled into England was known as *Point d'Angleterre*, and even in France at the present day Brussels lace is thus known.

Nowadays the greater part of the lace made in Belgium is composed of sprays worked on the pillow and *appliqué* to a machine-made net. The

hand-made net is used only in special instances for the bridal veils and dresses of queens and princesses, the kind of flax required being rarely grown, and still more rarely purchased. Such lace is scarcely to be had for love or money by the ordinary buyer, and costs from two to three guineas a yard when only as many inches wide. Most people are unable to distinguish between this and lace made up on a machine-woven net, which may be had for as many shillings per yard. Brussels lace is by no means so popular as it was some few years ago; and even wealthy London could not afford sufficient custom to enable the proprietors of a high-class Belgian lace showroom at the West End to continue their business. This is accounted for by many people by the disadvantage that Brussels lace has of losing its colour when laid by for some months. The dusky appearance it then assumes is said to be caused by the white lead employed in the bleaching of the sprigs; the use of this being as deleterious to the workers as to the lace itself, many of them suffering from the effects of lead poisoning.

Old Mechlin bears a peculiarity in its manufacture which renders it at once different and easy to distinguish from other pillow laces. It has

absolutely no ground at all, the patterns being formed so close together in its intricacies that the small spaces between them need no filling. The lace is exceedingly delicate and transparent, and the designs are outlined with a very glossy plait. Modern, or comparatively modern, Mechlin loses this characteristic, and is made, like many other laces, upon a ground of net, with round or six-sided meshes—these being smaller than in Brussels lace—and consisting partly of twisted, partly of plaited threads. Few laces have enjoyed more popularity in their time than Mechlin, and in the eighteenth century it was used for ruffles, cravats, and steinkirks to the exclusion of almost every other kind. Queen Charlotte, Princess Amelia, and Napoleon I. were also firm supporters of the manufacture of Mechlin lace.

Valenciennes lace has lost much of its former glory, the designs now being poor in comparison with those of the older work, and occupying only a small proportion of the width instead of, as formerly, being carried equally all over it. It is best described as uniform alike in the weaving and in the thread used, no outlining or raised work of any kind serving to mark out the pattern. Old Valenciennes lace is a marvel of intricacy as regards

pattern and ground, more than a thousand bobbins having been in use at one and the same time on the pillow, and a worker requiring two months, working fifteen hours a day, to make a pair of ruffles. Most of the modern Valenciennes lace is made in Belgium, and especially at Ypres. Besides these laces, which take the highest rank of all these works of art, are those made at Lille, Caen, Chantilly, Calvados, and Malta. These, though each of the more antique specimens is beautiful enough in its way, have never attained to the universal popularity of Brussels, Mechlin, or Valenciennes. Many of the above-named laces were principally made with silk threads instead of flax, and are more often black than white; but nowadays they can be so well imitated by machinery that few people care to give so high a price as that demanded for the real article. Maltese lace has entirely gone out of use of late years, which is greatly to be regretted, as few moderate-priced laces are so rich and handsome in appearance, or give so good an effect at a comparatively low price.

As with other artistic industries, the cause of lace-making in England has not been furthered by the exertion of any native talent which shows itself capable of producing original designs, grounds, or

fillings. With the exception, perhaps, of Honiton, English lace is a mere copy of such as had proved a success on the Continent. In Buckinghamshire and Bedfordshire the art of making lace after Maltese models still exists. English Lille was at one time made in the two above-named counties; Valenciennes in Northamptonshire; and *Point d'Argentan*, or a kind of lace founded upon it, in Dorsetshire. Although a coarse kind of bone lace had been made in England previous to the time of Katherine of Aragon, yet it was to the interest taken by her in the industry that was due the revival of the lace trade. Legend relates that this Queen even went so far as to destroy her own laces in times of trade depression in order to give the lace-workers the opportunity of making more. The debt of gratitude due to Queen Katherine for the re-introduction of lace-making still survives in some of the remoter districts of Bedfordshire and Buckinghamshire, where, on St. Katherine's Day, the lace-workers meet for a feast, and the boys of the neighbourhood go from house to house singing in the evening. At one time the festivities were conducted on a far more extensive scale, and the holiday was finished with a supper of "wigs"—a kind of cake made specially on these occasions—and a dance.

Many of the bobbins still used by our English lace-workers possess a history of their own. They are often handed down from mother to daughter for many generations, and they were frequently richly inlaid with metal, or were of carved wood. Sometimes the sweetheart's name, and mottoes, which were often pathetic as well as curious, were burnt into a bobbin. In one lace-making village where, tradition says, the moon sets, until lately lived a man who made it his business in life to design the bone bobbins. The women used to write out, with their own original spelling, what they wanted put on, and he would engrave it round, or up and down, or across, as seemed to him best. On one such bobbin are the words, "Too me, my dear, you may com near"; and on another, which is a perfect puzzle to read, as it is somehow worked up the bobbin, "Let no false lover gaine my hart"; on another the pathetic words, "George Read, died Feb. 19, 1842, aged six months."

So far so good, but the bobbin *alone* is a very unimportant part of a lace pillow; the gingles are by far the most curious, and no lace pillow would be considered of any use without them. The gingle is a number of beads hung on

the end of the bobbin, with "the bottom bead," as it is called, having some distinction. The real old-fashioned bobbin gingles can only be found in the cottages; the art of making them seems to have gone out. One has an acorn for the bottom bead; another has a mite (half-farthing); another a Swiss coin; another a ring; another a brass purse tassel.

All sorts of keepsakes in olden days were hung on the bobbin; and it was an understood thing that when a village girl had a sweetheart the bottom button of his waistcoat should go on the gingle. One is an old-fashioned flowered one, with glass over it, such as were made for the plush waistcoats the young countrymen used to wear. The beads, too, had names of their own. There was "the bird's egg," like in shape and colouring to its namesake; "the half-quartern of soap," and "the lollipop bead"; also "the Nelson bead," so called because at Nelson's death they were made, and, out of respect to his memory, put in mourning. The "picked bead" was a sort of prize chosen by the children in the lace school for their bobbins as a reward for good work.

These lace schools were sad places sixty years ago, and, as one woman said, "The pattern was often beaten into us." Tiny mites of four and

five were kept hard at work; often forty or fifty would be in one small room. Years ago the pins were made of brass wire, with round movable heads; these could be pushed down to about the middle, then beads of various colours put on, and a new false head made of a common burr from the harvest field. The burrs were gathered, then put into a brass thimble with vinegar and salt, or sometimes smoked in the smoke of damp hay in the cottage chimney, and put on the pin, where, as they dried, they shrank into shape, and became quite tight. Some of these have been known to remain on the pin for nearly a hundred years, and such pins cannot be had nowadays. The above interesting particulars, respecting the romances connected with even so simple a matter as a lace pillow, have been condensed from an article that appeared in 1884 in *Aunt Judy's Magazine*, which is now also non-existent.

The English lace industry received a fresh impetus in the sixteenth century, when so many sufferers from the cruelties of the Duke of Alva took refuge here. These people naturally followed the same calling as in their own country, and not only made lace on their own account, but taught the workers, and improved the patterns already in

use. Honiton lace is supposed to have been suggested by Brussels lace; and few can doubt that the present flourishing condition of the industry is but one more example of the "survival of the fittest," helped by the extensive patronage it has received from our Royal Family. Much of the finest Honiton lace is made at Beer, and the best pieces ever produced were the wedding-dresses of the Queen, the Princess Royal, the Princess Alice, and the Princess of Wales. The famous Honiton sprigs are made on the pillow, and are worked together with a bar ground; this having entirely taken the place of the finer *réseau*, which at one time formed the pride of the Devonshire workers. Honiton lace has suffered many reverses of fortune, beginning with the time of the American war, when English ladies developed a fancy for foreign laces once more rather than for those of their own country. The Society of Anti-Gallicans was instituted about this time, with the view of giving prizes for home-made lace. The greatest blow of all was given by the invention of the bobbin lace-making machinery; and this had much to do with the deterioration that took place in the patterns used in Honiton lace, the more formal sprigs known by the workers as "bullocks' hearts," "frying pans," etc. (the names

are sufficiently descriptive), taking the place of those designs from natural leaf and floral forms. During the last few years a re-action has set in, and at the present time the patterns of Honiton lace are all that can be desired.

In Ireland strenuous efforts have been made during the last fifty years to introduce lace-making as a means of bettering the condition of the people ; but little is made there worthy of the name of lace, pretty and well-worked though it be, except such as is copied directly from the old models. Irish point, properly so called, is an imitation of Brussels *appliqué*, but is now rarely made. Much of the Irish crochet is wrongly known as Irish point, but is worthy of the highest admiration. The main idea of this is based upon those buttonhole points for which Spain and Venice were so justly famed, the heavy *cordonnets* made by the crochet-hook bearing an almost exact resemblance to the button-hole stitch made with the needle. It is largely made at the Ursuline Convent at Blackrock.

Carrickmacross Guipure is of two kinds. One of these may be best described as a species of cutwork, the foundation being of fine cambric, the design on which is worked round with overcast and button-hole stitches. The linen between the details of the

pattern is cut away, and the interstices are partially filled by brides and bars. In the second kind of Carrickmacross Guipure the cambric is laid upon a foundation of net, and is ornamented with point lace stitches. Both these guipures partake of the nature of embroidery rather than of lace. Limerick lace is a development of tambour work, but will never take a high rank, owing to the mechanical way in which it is produced. The net foundation (machine-made, of course) is stretched in a frame, the pattern laid beneath it. The outlines are then followed with chain stitches made with a steel hook, such as is used for crochet, but much finer, and more uniform in thickness.

Miss M'Lean has a lace-making school on the banks of Lough Erne still in active work, which was started by her mother forty years ago, and in which the pupils, chosen from the peasantry of the neighbourhood, are taught to imitate the famous rose points of South Europe. Mrs. M'Lean herself learnt the art originally by carefully unravelling a piece of the lace in her own possession. Many others have followed the example set by these ladies, and the finest laces in all styles are now made in the schools connected with the principal convents in the country. Some years since the Government insti-

tuted an inquiry as to the present condition of the lace trade of Ireland, with the almost universal result that the workmanship was found to be excellent; but in every case the patterns were poor, and the difficulty of getting new ones extremely great. The Queen, the Marchioness of Londonderry, Mrs. Alfred Morrison, and other ladies, have taken great interest in the industry, and have given many commissions for lace to be made from the new patterns supplied to the workers.

CHAPTER VIII.

TAPESTRY.

"Her bed chamber . . . was hang'd
With tapestry of silk and silver; the story,
Proud Cleopatra, when she met her Roman,
And Cydnus swell'd above the banks, or for
The press of boats, or pride: a piece of work
So bravely done, so rich, that it did strive
In workmanship and value; which, I wonder'd,
Could be rarely and exactly wrought."

Cymbeline, Act II., sc. iv.

NINE-TENTHS of the visitors to the South Kensington Museum, Hampton Court, Hatfield House, and other places hung with tapestries, go away firmly impressed with the idea that these hangings are entirely the work of the needle; and remarks are freely made as to the patience and industry needed for the execution of such large pieces of embroidery. It is not possible to say how this error originated; but that it should be so universal clearly shows that those who hold this mistaken notion have never taken the trouble

to look closely into the web of a piece of tapestry, or they would see how impossible it would be to get such evenness and regularity of surface with a needle alone. For all that, it is by no means easy to mark the point at which embroidery leaves off and tapestry begins; and much of the so-called "needlework" of history is, in reality, what we know as tapestry, and *vice versâ*. If embroidery is to be considered, as many writers assert, as the sister art of painting, what is to be said of tapestry? Many authorities define tapestry as a picture wrought with the needle; but if this were to hold good, most of our prized needlework of ancient times would no longer take rank as embroidery. Though the general pictorial effect may be somewhat similar, a flatter and less varied result is gained in tapestry than in needlework, partly owing to the monotony in the direction taken by the threads, partly owing to the size and general make of the shuttle which plays the part of a needle. The true difference appears to be, that embroidery is executed upon a material already complete in itself; tapestry upon a foundation of loose threads that would be useless without the ornamental woof-threads which connect them.

Before tracing the history of tapestry, it is advisable to give a few particulars respecting the

general principles of the manufacture. The use of a loom is as ancient as that of the needle itself. The earliest consisted merely of a framework for holding the longitudinal strings, the worsted being darned round these with a spindle or bobbin. The looms used in tapestry weaving are of two kinds: those having the work arranged horizontally or parallel to the ground, and others having the threads arranged vertically. The rollers at the upper and lower ends of the loom are known, technically, as the *lisses*, and are distinguished as *haute* or *basse*, according to their position; hence our terms "high warp" and "low warp." The use of the low warp having been introduced into Europe by the Saracens, the name Saracenic for many years served to distinguish tapestries made in this position from those made by a high-warp loom. The *haute lisse* was introduced by the Flemish weavers, and was an improvement over the *basse lisse*, as the worker could come to the front occasionally to see how the design was progressing; but as the work was wrong side uppermost in the flat frame, this was not possible. Only experts can tell the difference in the completed work between that executed in a *basse lisse* and that in a *haute lisse* loom, unless by the number of the seams, the weaving

in the low *lisse* being narrower than that in the high.

M. Champeaux, in his Handbook, gives the following clear account, obtained from M. Lacordaire, manager of the Gobelins factory, of the method of weaving tapestry in a high-warp loom, where the warp is arranged on a vertical plane, and rolled round the cylinders. "It is composed of worsted, cotton, or even silk threads, of four or five yarns twisted together, and it must be perfectly smooth. When stretched upon the rollers the workman divides it into two leaves, which are kept apart by a thread passed alternately between the threads of the warp, and by a glass tube, two or three centimetres in diameter, called the *bâton de croisure* ; in consequence of this separation half the threads of the warp are brought in front, while the other half fall behind. To each thread of the leaf, at the height of the workman's hand, is attached a bit of fine cord in the shape of a ring, called a coat, and these coats are fastened to a strong pole, called the coat stave. It is by drawing these coats forward that the workman, who is seated between the warp and the picture which he is copying, can bring the back threads forward, so as to enable him to cross the warp and the woof. The material for the woof is

wound on a wooden shuttle, called a 'broach' or 'flute.'

"To form the web, the workman takes a shuttle mounted with wool or silk, the end of which he fastens to the warp to the left of the space to be covered by the colour in his shuttle; then passing his left hand between the two leaves separated by the *bâton de croisure*, he draws towards him the threads which this shade is to cover; his right hand, passing between the threads, lays hold of the shuttle, which he brings to the right; and his left hand, taking hold of the coats, brings forward the back threads of the warp, while the right hand returns the shuttle to the place from which it was first moved. This passing and returning of the shuttle forms what is called two shoots, or a course.

"The workman continues to repeat these courses, one above the other, following the extent and outline of the space to be filled in by the colour in his shuttle. For each different shade or colour he takes a fresh shuttle, and fastens the end of it on the side on which he is working, which is always the wrong side. After each course he closes with the sharpened end of his shuttle the threads of the woof of that part of the web already completed, and after a series of courses, placed one

above the other, he strikes the woof from top to bottom with a heavy comb of ivory, the teeth of which penetrate between each thread of the warp, which in this way becomes completely concealed by the woof."

We find occasional references in ancient history to hangings used by the Babylonians, Egyptians, and Greeks, which point to the use of tapestries almost from prehistoric times. The ancient tapestries found in Egyptian tombs are specially valuable, as practically showing not only how perfect was the manufacture, even so early as several centuries before Christ, but in all essentials it has been proved that the very looms of the Egyptians were the same in principle as those used in the Gobelins at the present day. The Greeks learnt the art from the Egyptians, and a scrap preserved in the Hermitage at St. Petersburg has been found to have been woven in precisely the same way as some of the pictured pieces of Egyptian work in the South Kensington Museum. Here the plain part of the weaving was done with the shuttle, a space being left uncrossed by woof-threads, wherever it was necessary for the design to be executed in colours by the tapestry weaver. The flax used for the foundation or background of the design is

very fine in quality, and so highly polished as to resemble silk.

The tapestry woven ornament (such as that on p. 21) was generally formed with coloured wools; and the supposition by Mr. Alan Cole, that such garments amongst the South Kensington collection of Egyptian textiles as have a worsted decoration upon them were made for persons not bound by traditional Egyptian custom, is founded upon the existence of an old law forbidding the use of wool in burial dresses. Hence these very ancient tapestries were woven probably for Greeks, Romans, or Christian Copts. It is interesting to know that similar ancient fragments of weaving have of late years been found in Peru, the details and designs on many of which greatly resemble those of the Egyptian specimens. Such a design as that given here was occasionally sewn to a linen robe, and thus served admirably to mend and, at the same time, to conceal a worn portion of the material. Mr. Cole considers that it is to this custom among the Romans that Pliny alludes when he says that "a garment, when it has been worn for some time, is often embroidered with wool from Egypt."

The story of Penelope is, by most critics, taken as referring to a stuff woven in a loom; but it has

been suggested of late that, owing to the difficulty of undoing by night the portion made during the previous day, it was knitting rather than tapestry weaving. However this may be, it is clear that knitting must have been well known in the time of Penelope, as specimens have been found in ancient tombs ; but I incline to the generally-accepted version of the tale, especially as Calypso and Circe are also mentioned as using a loom. A full description of the process of weaving is given in Ovid's "Metamorphoses" (see p. 135), which shows that the art was familiar to the Romans some twenty-nine or thirty years before Christ. There are several allusions to "carpets of tapestry" in the Bible, the Jews doubtless having learnt the art of weaving from the Egyptians. The Greeks, having also learnt from the same people, passed on the knowledge to their conquerors, the Romans ; but this nation speedily changed the style of the design, and turned from the dignified and somewhat naturalistic style of their teachers to the grotesque and formal. In the East tapestries were of the most gorgeous description, studded with precious stones, and the designs themselves picturing birds, animals, flowers, and mythological scenes.

To England there can be little doubt that the

earliest tapestries were brought from the East by the Crusaders, and the excellent quality of the wool cultivated in the country proved an additional incentive to the emulation of some of the works of foreign weavers. Unfortunately, few records and no specimens are left to us of these early productions of English looms. An old law of 1344 tended to regulate the traffic, and the manufacture and the disposal of certain tapestry hangings made in London formed a part of the will of the Earl of Arundel in 1392. Monks pursued the art in the monasteries, taking their designs from the pages of illuminated manuscripts of the times ; and a record of 1316 mentions a purchase by Simon, Abbot of Ramsey, of looms, staves, shuttles, and a slay. A *tapissier*, it will be remembered, formed one of the band of Canterbury pilgrims ; but it is doubtful whether this term alluded to a weaver of carpets rather than that of tapestry. A fine but much damaged piece of English tapestry, representing the marriage of Henry VI., is preserved at Coventry ; and a reredos belonging to the Vintners' Company, and one or two other existing specimens, are known to be English. The hangings woven by the monks of Canterbury in 1595 for the adornment of the choir of the cathedral have been traced to Aix, in Provençe.

The first manufactory under royal patronage in England was that established in the reign of Henry VIII. by Sheldon, who gave his manor house of Burcheston, in Warwickshire, to be converted into a tapestry manufactory, and commissioned the manager, Robert Hicks, to execute for him a series of maps of the counties of Warwickshire, Gloucestershire, Worcestershire, and Oxfordshire. These very pieces are still preserved at York. At Hatfield are four panels of tapestry representing the four seasons, which are supposed to have been made in England in the time of Henry VIII. Doubtless, the splendour of the Field of the Cloth of Gold had much to do with the attempt to re-introduce tapestry weaving into England, the art being at that time a comparatively new one in France.

Cardinal Wolsey had a perfect passion for tapestry, and collected many hangings for his palace at Hampton. There is still a fine collection there; whence the panel on page 194, representing a scene in the history of Abraham, is taken. This is supposed to have been designed by Bernard Van Orley at Brussels, he himself having travelled in Italy, and profited by the instruction of Raphael, whose influence can clearly be traced in the figure-drawing

TAPESTRY FROM HAMPTON COURT. SCENE IN THE HISTORY OF ABRAHAM.

in these tapestries. It is imagined that they formed part of a royal present to Henry VIII., as they are mentioned in the inventory of his goods. The appearance of these hangings, when they first left the looms, must have been indeed gorgeous ; for more than one record of the time speaks of them in some such terms as these: "The dress, landscapes, buildings, and the like, are in gold, silver, and variegated silks, so artistically worked as though they had been carefully painted with colours." Evelyn mentions this series of tapestry. "I believe," he says, "the world can show nothing nobler of the kind than the storys of Abraham and Tobit." * The borders are not less wonderful and ornate than the rest. Several specimens in the same collection have been identified as having belonged to Cardinal Wolsey.

Queen Elizabeth did not specially interest hersel in tapestry, but it is in her reign that was executed the fine series representing the destruction of the Spanish Armada, which, to the sorrow of all connoisseurs, was destroyed in the fire at the House of Lords in 1834. Fortunately, engravings are existing which reproduce the details sufficiently to enable it to be understood how very truly the method of the naval warfare of those days was repeated on the

* *Diary*, June 8th, 1662.

tapestry. Human figures scarcely appear on these designs ; but in the borders were inserted portraits of the principal English commanders of the time. Only a scrap of one of these tapestries is left, and this escaped the fate of the rest by an accident. It was James I. who helped to found the famous factory at Mortlake. This began well under the superintendence of Sir Francis Crane, the painter, and many Flemish experts from Oudenarde and other places were induced to undertake the weaving.

It was at this establishment that Charles I. gave the order for the reproduction of some of Raphael's cartoons ; but this met with little success, and the cartoons became severely damaged. At the time of the parliamentary wars the art fell into disuse, to be somewhat revived at the Restoration, and discontinued finally after the death of Crane. Some of the best known of the Mortlake tapestries are two pieces at Hampton Court representing the Battle of Solebay. Other attempts to re-introduce the manufacture have been made from time to time at Fulham, Soho, and Windsor ; but even at the last-named place, where the works were under the highest patronage in the land, the efforts were in vain. The only place where tapestry is now made

in England is Merton Abbey, Surrey, where Messrs. Morris & Co. have set up their looms, which are on the same principle, as a whole, as those of the Gobelins. Some very fine tapestries have been produced here; notably a hanging for the adornment of the Chapel of Exeter College, representing the Adoration of the Magi from designs by Mr. Burne-Jones.

It was as early as the twelfth century that the Flemings achieved the art of working with either high- or low-warp looms, the wool being procured from England in a natural state, and dyed in the country. Owing to disturbances in other parts of Europe, it happened that the art became gradually centred in Flanders, at that time in the zenith of its power and prosperity. The Dukes of Burgundy were specially noted as lovers of luxury and patrons of art of all kinds; and a great deal of the best Flemish tapestry extant is known to have once formed part of the household goods of one of these wealthy princes. In the fifteenth century, all over Europe, there was an unlimited demand for Flemish tapestries, churches and palaces being embellished with it, and at times of national and other festivals the streets and houses were draped with tapestries, carpets, and costly fabrics of other kinds. Many

ancient houses still retain the tenter-hooks, both inside and outside, upon which these tapestries were fastened. The weavers themselves took no mean part as citizens of the principal towns and cities of Flanders, Bruges, Antwerp, Arras ; Oudenarde and Brussels taking a high rank, and the latter city in particular gradually acquiring the monopoly. Arras also took a leading place, and, in fact, gave its name to tapestries in general ; but its reputation ceased from the time of the capture of the town by Louis XI. in 1477.

In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries the most celebrated painters of the age were employed to draw the cartoons, among them being Van Eyck, Hugo Van der Goes, Roger Vander Weyden, Bernard von Orley, and Mabuse. The brothers Van Eyck are generally credited with being the first painters to mix their colours with oil. Roger Vander Weyden, it is supposed, turned his attention to painting on canvas or linen instead of on wood, as was then usual. Under him the general standard of the designs became raised, and Flemish art in consequence greatly improved. Of Mabuse the story is told that having on one occasion, received a present of a length of brocade of which to have a court dress made, he found it

more advantageous to sell this to supply his immediate wants, and to appear before the Emperor Charles V. in a costume made, it is said, of paper, but probably of linen, painted so as to resemble the silken fabric so exactly that none discovered the deception.

The famous cartoons drawn by Raphael, and now in the South Kensington Museum, were originally prepared to be reproduced in two sets of tapestry, one by order of Pope Leo X., to be hung in the Sistine Chapel in the Vatican, the other as a present to Henry VIII. from the Pope. It is owing, in great measure, to the painter Rubens that these cartoons have become the property, as it were, of the art-loving public of England, as he persuaded Charles I. to buy them from the Brussels factory, where they had been lying disregarded for years. At the sale of the King's possessions, after his execution, the cartoons were purchased for the nation by Cromwell. William III. finally housed them in a gallery specially built for them at Hampton Court Palace, whence they were removed to the South Kensington Museum by order of Queen Victoria. Several of the tapestries made from these cartoons are in existence, some being in the Garde Meuble in Paris ; another in Rome ; others in Spain.

In the later part of the fifteenth century the designs for Flemish tapestries lost their purity, and became mere imitations of painted pictures, complete even to the reproduction of their gilt frames. Many and curious are the rules and regulations that are still preserved as regards the management of the guilds and workshops of the tapestry weavers. No practical weaver, for instance, was permitted to design the human figures upon his canvas, but only the minor details, such as the flowers or fruits and herbage we generally see occupying the foreground. The rest was left for the painter who happened to be attached to the factory. Only natives or certified citizens of Brussels were allowed to occupy studios in the city, and they were allowed but one apprentice each. No panel of tapestry was permitted to leave the house without a certificate given by a responsible jury as to its perfection. It is much to be regretted that more of the work executed nowadays cannot be thus fully superintended. In the reign of Philip II., and under the persecutions of the Duke of Alva, the constant wars and tumults and the heavy taxes put an end to the industry; but under the rule of Albert and Isabella it somewhat revived, and the looms were once more set up, the cartoons of Martin

de Vos, Teniers, and the work sent out by the Gobelins serving as models.

At the end of the fifteenth century some of the Flemish weavers were tempted to enter the service of the princes of the House of Este in Italy. Here they and their successors produced remarkable pictures under the guidance of such painters as Mantegna and Giulio Romano, Ferrara becoming established as the headquarters of the industry. As in England, however, the art did not thrive after the death of its own particular patron ; and although in the sixteenth century it was brought to its greatest perfection under the rule of the great House of Medicis, it failed to take any permanent place in the country. The art become extinct after the death of its noble patron, and though attempts were made to revive it at Naples and Venice, they met with no success. In Germany the trade became centred at Nuremberg, the weavers working independently of either designers or workers from Flanders ; thus giving to German tapestry an individuality that is acceptable as a relief from the almost universal copying of Flemish methods and designs. At Frankfort the industry was established by refugees from Flanders at the time of the Edict of Nantes.

In Spain tapestry weaving never flourished, though at Madrid a manufactory was founded, with Rubens as designer. The factory languished even during his lifetime, and was closed after his death. The fact that the collection of tapestries still preserved in the royal palace at Madrid is the richest in the world is supposed to be due to the fact that during the time of the Spanish dominion in Flanders these hangings were presented to, or bought by, Spanish nobles who, when recalled to Spain, took them with them. The tapestry opposite is from this collection, and forms an admirable example of renaissance work of the sixteenth century. The figure drawing is excellent, but much of the beauty of the design is concentrated in the border, which is alive with little figures playing musical instruments, dancing and sporting amongst foliage, or toying with birds and animals. In the corners are four medallions, representing scenes from the life of Tobit other than that shown in the centre. The whole design of the border, though ornate, and particularly full, is remarkably well balanced, and thus shows unmistakable signs of having been devised by a master mind. If the "key-note of tapestry, the secret of its loveliness, is the complete filling up of

TAPESTRY FROM MADRID.

every corner and square inch of surface with lovely, and fanciful, and suggestive design," this piece should take a very high rank indeed. Ancient archives of the city of Madrid inform us that the tapestries, of which one panel is illustrated here, were purchased by Charles V. from John Dirick of Mulenar and Gaspar of Utrecht, who were probably the weavers. They are further described as being made of "thread of gold, silver, silk, and worsted," and were, it is supposed, woven between the years 1530 and 1540.

The "storied tapestries" of France were accepted as knights' ransoms at the beginning of the fifteenth century, but after this period little new work was executed in that country until the sixteenth century; when the art was re-introduced by Francis I. Opposite is shown a panel, now preserved at Rheims. The set to which it belongs was woven in that city by the order of the Archbishop Henry of Lorraine. The designs, prepared by Murgalet of Troyes, were woven by Daniel Pepersack, a weaver of Charleville. The less well-connected design in the border of the piece illustrated shows that it can by no means compete with the Flemish tapestries of an earlier date; the figure-drawing is also far less perfect.

The manufacture does not appear to have flourished in France till about a hundred years later, when the chief atelier was under the management of a Dutchman named Gluck. Colbert, who

TAPESTRY FROM RHEIM .

was ever on the look-out for any new manufacture that would be advantageous to his country, persuaded Louis XIV. in 1667, to take the factory under his patronage. Owing to the superiority of English wool for such a purpose as tapestry

weaving, Colbert even went so far as to desire the importation of sheep from England, in order that the whole of the work might be French. This plan, however, fell through, owing to objections on the part of the English, who, to keep the monopoly of the wool trade, made any such importation punishable by death. Under the management of Charles Lebrun, later of Bérain, and later still of David, the Gobelin factory flourished in spite of all drawbacks. The Savonnerie, a carpet manufactory founded by Henri IV., became incorporated with it in 1826. A minor factory is situated at Beauvais, the method of work being totally different.

At the Gobelins the threads are arranged vertically in a frame, the workman standing at the back of the threads with a tinted picture at hand to copy from. In producing the design he uses a series of shuttles, bobbins, or spindles, wound with wool, which he passes round the upright threads and back again, so that each thread is overcast, as it were, with the tint required. This method gives the utmost delicacy both of execution and of shading. At Beauvais a *basse lisse* frame is employed; but owing to the threads having to be finished off on the right side, it has a certain

roughness of texture, which, though having a good effect in softening and blending the shades, yet renders it less fine in finish than the other kinds. Beauvais and Gobelins managed to survive the troubles of the revolutionary periods in France, owing to the energy they showed in producing less expensive articles in accordance with the impoverished state of finances at the time; after which they were partially re-organised, and schools of painting and design were instituted in connection with them. Modern Gobelins is produced in small quantities only, its high price rendering it chiefly suitable for state presents.

Not one of the least interesting points connected with the study of tapestry is that of the various signatures by which the work sent out from the different workshops is distinguished. Such marks are usually to be found at the left-hand side of the border. Many of the earlier tapestries sent out from Brussels bear heart-shaped signs between two reversed Bs, the badge of the House of Burgundy. In later work the letters were made in the ordinary way, and the shield between them became more symmetrical in form. In one of the Madrid tapestries, shown on page 203, an R

and a trefoil are woven in the lower part of the right-hand margin. This mark, it is supposed, is that of some particular atelier in Brussels; but experts have as yet been unable to give it a name. Some makers reproduced the arms of the town in which the weaving was executed; others adopted those of the patron under whom they worked. Not infrequently the name of the weaver was symbolised by some special mark bearing some reference to that name; for instance, Jean de Rost, or Roster, a weaver of Brussels, who, under the Medicis, established an atelier at Florence, marked his work with a rude representation of a fowl in process of roasting on a spit. So the emblem of Lille was a silver lily on a field gules between the letters L F. Other marks are much like modern monograms, in being so elaborate that it is not possible to make out what they really mean; while some tapestries have a double signature, that of the painter and that of the weaver.

As regards the use of tapestry in modern times, I can scarcely do better than quote from a report of a lecture given at the last Arts and Crafts Exhibition by Mr. William Morris, who, from his practical knowledge of the art of tapestry

weaving, is better able than most people to express an opinion on the subject. Mr. Morris points out that we are richer than the Middle Ages, and so should be better able to afford this form of lovely wall-covering, which, for artistic tone, is absolutely without rival. He says that the very limitation of material and form forces the imaginative designer into giving us something really beautiful and decorative. "What is the use of setting an artist in a twelve-acre field and telling him to design a house? Give him a limited space, and he is forced by its limitation to concentrate, and to fill with pure loveliness the narrow surface at his disposal. The worker also gives to the original design a very perfect richness of detail, and the threads with their varying colours and delicate reflections convey into the work a new source of delight. Here we found perfect unity between the imaginative artist and the handicraftsman. The one was not too free, the other was not a slave. The eye of the artist saw, his brain conceived, his imagination created; but the hand of the weaver had also its opportunity for wonderful work, and did not copy what was already made, but recreated and put into a new and delightful form a design that for its perfection

needed the loom to aid, and had to pass into a fresh and marvellous material before its beauty came to its real flower and blossom of absolutely right expression and artistic effect."

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